This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Tappan Presbyterian Association
LIBRARY.

Presented by English Library of U. of M.
(Prof. Hempl) in exchange.
Oct. 7, 1895

BX
5133
.R76

J 6347

THE WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

LATE REVEREND

WILLIAM ROMAINE, A. M.

RECTOR OF

ST. ANDREW BY THE WARDROBE,

AND

ST. ANN, BLACKFRIARS,

AND

LECTURER OF ST. DUNSTAN'S, IN THE WEST,

LONDON.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOLUME IV.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR R. BAYNES, 25, IVY LANE, PATERNOSTER-ROW, AND G. OFFOR, 2, PORTERN-ROW, TOWER HILL.

1821.

W. Gracie, Printer, Berwick.

3-15-28 P.H.

A

PRACTICAL COMMENT

ON THE

HUNDRED AND SEVENTH PSALM,

PREACHED

AT THE THURSDAY'S LECTURE, AT ST. DUNSTAN'S CHURCH, IN THE WEST, LONDON.

It becometh well the Just to be thankful.—Psalm xxxiii.

PREFACE.

THE following comment was not drawn up with any view to its publication. It was only intended for the pulpit, at the Thursday's lecture at St. Dunstan's, and after it had been preached would have been thrown aside; for the author is obliged to make a sermon every week, besides the lecture, and he had no thoughts of sending such hasty compositions to the press. He knows that they want every qualification necessary to make them admired in this polite age: their manner is unfashionably plain and simple, they have nothing studied or brilliant in their style, nor delicately nice in the method; no pretty turns of wit, or striking antitheses to entertain the reader. And the matter is as opposite to the established taste as the manner of them. They are not in the least indebted to the boasted light of nature, they borrow no ornaments from the celebrated religion of nature, nor do they receive any aids from the moral scheme; but they are the plain honest truths of scripture, of the Christian church, and of the church of England. And yet these great authorities are not sufficient to protect them from contempt, nor excuse the author from the charge of novelty. He is very sensible of it. He has been long enough acquainted with the received opinions of the age,

and he cannot expect any kind of applause, and he thanks God he does not desire it, from the present set of great and learned men. If you are doing right, you will certainly be censured; and if you resolve to do right, you must learn to neglect censure; I have been prevailed on to neglect it by the earnest and daily repeated importunity of the hearers of these lectures, by whom I was determined to make them public. They are here laid before the world, as they were preached, without any alteration; and if it please God to make them the instruments of doing some service to the souls of mankind, my loss of reputation as an author will be fully repaid. If but one single person should find reason to bless God for these lectures, I shall not lose my end; although I hope they will be useful to many. And I pray the almighty God and Saviour of the world to send them out in his grace and strength, and to accompany them abundantly with his divine power, and then his glory will be the more displayed, if any mighty effects should be produced by such weak instruments.

Every minister of the gospel, who has any zeal for his master's honour, or love for the souls of men, ought to exert himself in these days of reproach and blasphemy: for we are sunk into the very dregs of the latter times, in which it was foretold that iniquity should abound. And does it not now abound? has not his majesty (king GEORGE the II.) complained more than once from the throne of its abounding? has not the convocation at last (in the year 1755) seen it, and publicly confessed the abounding of iniquity?

and is it not obvious to every unprejudiced spectator, that our people, high and low, are totally corrupt, not only in morals, but also in principles? for it is too evident a truth to be denied, that we are departed from the doctrines of the reformation, and yet we keep up our subscriptions to the articles and homilies then established, which are entirely founded upon the certainty of the fall of mankind in Adam, and of their recovery in Jesus Christ. We were wholly ruined by the one, and we are wholly saved by the other. The sin of the one was imputed to us, as the righteousness of the other is imputed to us. All the scripture is built upon these two truths, as well as the church of England. But no sooner does a clergyman venture to speak out upon these points, than he is immediately branded with the name of enthusiast, although he has declared, in the most solemn manner before God, his assent and consent to every thing contained in the articles and homilies upon the fall and redemption of mankind, and although the very persons, who abuse him, have done the same. Urge the plainest passages of scripture, appeal to your subscription, call upon reason, and summon matter of fact to bear testimony to the soberness of your faith, yet you cannot avoid an hard name. If you think of avoiding it, because you do not deserve it, you will find yourself mistaken. I made the same mistake, and fancied myself quite safe, while I had the scripture, and the church, on my side; until I found that a strong suspicion had gone out among some ministerial clergy, as if I was leaning a little matter, and in-

clining as it were something towards enthusiasm. And they suspected this, because I did not lean and incline towards them or their doctrines and practices; which most certainly I did not. Instead of defending the Jew-bill, and the marriage-bill, I rather insisted upon the total corruption of mankind by the fall, and the freeness and fulness of redemption through Jesus Christ, and the necessity of the grace of the Holy Spirit, to change and renew our corrupt hearts, in order to dispose them to receive the benefits of Christ's redemption, and to enable them to live a holy and a Christian life. These doctrines are now dressed up by our great men in a bear-skin, and baited under the odious nick-name of Enthusiasm, and our people begin to join the cry, and to fancy, that a man must be a little tinctured with enthusiasm, before he will make himself so ridiculous, as to defend these exploded doctrines. But if others fear a nick-name from this quarter, I do not. The ministerial clergy are welcome to call me what they please. I honour their reproach: for I find myself in the best of company by leaving theirs. The whole church of God, in the Old Testament and the New, believed and acted upon the truth of the doctrines beforementioned. All the primitive fathers embraced them. The martyrs died, and sealed the belief of them with their blood. The protestant church has with one voice maintained them. And the church of England has made the acknowledgment of them absolutely necessary for every one of her ministers, and therefore if it be enthusiasm to acknowledge what she has made necessary,

then the church of England is turned enthusiast; and her best sons are the strongest enthusiasts. And what then are we to think of those court divines, who expose their brethren, and ridicule them under the disgraceful name of Enthusiasts, for no other reason, but because we make a conscience of our oaths and subscriptions, and dare not risk our eternal salvation for any present honour or preferment.

The generality of readers may not perhaps be acquainted with the true state of the case, and therefore it may be useful to them to shew upon what footing these doctrines stand, which are now exploded under the odious name of enthusiasm. I will carry my enquiry no higher up than the reformation of the church of England, and will endeavour to convince the reader, that if we are enthusiasts for abiding by the doctrines of the reformation, then these persons must be something much worse, who have subscribed to those doctrines, and yet have departed from them.

The fall of mankind in Adam, their corruption, their forfeiture through and in him are now openly denied. But hear what our church says upon these points. In the office for public baptism, we have these words, "Forasmuch as all "men are conceived and born in sin, and that "our Saviour Christ saith, none can enter into "the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate "and born anew of water and of the Holy "Ghost." Mind, we are conceived in sin, and then born in sin, and it is necessary to be born anew of the Holy Spirit. The ninth article explains the matter thus:

"Original sin standeth not in the following of "Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk) but it "is the fault and corruption of the nature of "every man, that naturally is engendered of the "offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far "gone from original righteousness, and is of his "own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh "lusteth always contrary to spirit."

The homilies are full of the same doctrine. The second part of the sermon on the misery of man has these words: "Thus we have heard, "how evil we be of ourselves, who of ourselves, "and by ourselves, we have no goodness, help, or "salvation, but contrariwise, sin, damnation, and "death everlasting: which, if we deeply weigh "and consider, we shall the better understand "the great mercy of God, and how our salvation "cometh only by Christ: for in ourselves (as of "ourselves) we find nothing whereby we may be "delivered from this miserable captivity into the "which we are cast through the envy of the "devil, by breaking of God's commandment in "our first parent Adam. We are all become "unclean, but we all are not able to cleanse our-"selves, nor make one another of us clean. We "are by nature the children of God's wrath, but "we are not able to make ourselves the children "and inheritors of God's glory. We are sheep "that run astray, but we cannot of our own "power come again to the sheepfold, so great is "our imperfection and weakness."

These words want no comment; they describe our natural corruption by the fall in such clear and express terms, that all the art of sophistry

cannot explain them away. I will confirm their testimony by two bishops of our church; that by the mouth of two witnesses the truth may be established. Bishop Wilkins on prayer has these words,

"All the pravity and baseness, which fills up "every part and power about us, are but diffu- "sions of our original corruptions. What a "world of mischief is there in our several parts? "our wills, affections, our tongues, eyes; and "yet all these are but as little rivulets; the "fountain, or rather the sea that feeds them, is "our corrupt nature."

Bishop Beveridge shall be my other authority; the title of the fourth article of his private thoughts is this,

"I believe that I was conceived in sin, and "brought forth in iniquity: and that ever since "I have been continually conceiving mischief, "and bringing forth vanity."

"This article of my faith I must of necessity "believe, whether I will or no; for if I could "not believe it to be true, I should therefore "have the more cause to believe it to be so; be- "cause, unless my heart was naturally very sinful "and corrupt, it would be impossible for me not "to believe that which I have so much cause "continually to bewail; or, if I do not bewail it, "I have still the more cause to believe it; and "therefore, am so much the more persuaded of "it, by how much the less I find myself affected "with it. For, certainly, I must be a hard "hearted wretch indeed, steeped in sin, and "fraught with corruption to the highest, if I

" know myself so oft to have incensed the wrath
" of the most high God against me, as I do, and
" yet not be sensible of my natural corruption,
" nor acknowledge myself to be, by nature a
" child of wrath, as well as others. For I verily
" believe, that the want of such a due sense of
" myself, argues as much original corruption, as
" murder and whoredom do actual pollution.
" And I shall ever suspect those to be the most
" under the power of that corruption that labour
" most, by arguments, to divest it of its power."

" And, therefore, for my own part, I am re-
" solved, by the grace of God, never to go about
" to confute that by wilful arguments, which I
" find so true by woful experience. If there be
" not a bitter root in my heart, whence proceeds
" so much bitter fruit in my life and conversa-
" tion? Alas! I can neither set my head nor
" heart about any thing, but I still shew myself
" to be the sinful offspring of sinful parents, by
" being the sinful parent of a sinful offspring;
" nay, I do not only betray the inbred venom of
" my heart, by poisoning my common actions, but
" even my most religious performances also with
" sin. I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear,
" or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give
" an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin;
" nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but
" my very confessions are still aggravations of
" them; my repentance needs to be repented of,
" my tears want washing, and the very washing
" of my tears needs still to be washed over again
" with the blood of my Redeemer. Thus, not
" only the worst of my sins, but even the best of

"my duties, speak me a child of Adam. Inso-
" much, that whensoever I reflect upon my past
" actions, methinks I cannot but look upon my
" whole life, from the time of my conception to
" this very moment, to be but as one continued
" act of sin."

" And whence can such a continued stream of
" corruption flow from, but from the corrupt
" cistern of my heart? And whence can that
" corrupt cistern of my heart be filled, but from
" the corrupt fountain of my nature? Cease,
" therefore, O my soul, to gainsay the power of
" original sin within thee, and labour now to sub-
" due it under thee. But why do I speak of my
" subduing this sin myself? Surely, this would
" be both an argument of it, and an addition to
" it. It is to thee, O my God, who art both the
" searcher and cleanser of hearts, that I desire to
" make my moan: it is to thee I cry out in the
" bitterness of my soul. O wretched man that I
" am, who shall deliver me from the body of this
" death? Who shall? Oh! who can do it but
" thyself? Arise thou therefore, O my God, and
" shew thyself as infinitely merciful in the par-
" doning, as thou art infinitely powerful in the
" purging away my sins."

These words so clearly describe the great truth, which I have endeavoured to establish in the following lectures, that I could not avoid citing them at full length. And now, if the reader will sum up the evidence, and impartially review what our articles, and homilies, and our bishops have taught concerning the corrupt fallen state of mankind, he will certainly acquit

us of the charge of enthusiasm, who say nothing more than they have said, and who are obliged by our subscriptions to say all that they have said.

The second doctrine of Christianity, which is now ridiculed under the name of enthusiasm, is the free and full redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ, by whom we are justified from all the sinfulness and miseries of the fall.

The thirteenth article absolutely excludes every work of ours from having any hand in justifying us, and states the case thus, "Works "done before the grace of Christ, and the in-"spiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, "forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus "Christ, neither do they make men meet to re-"ceive, or as the school authors say, deserve grace "of congruity; yea rather, for that they are not "done, as God hath willed and commanded "them to be done, we doubt not but they have "the nature of sin."

The title of the second homily is this, "A "sermon on the salvation of mankind by ONLY "Christ our Saviour from sin and death ever-"lasting." This homily is divided into three parts, the last begins with these words, "It hath "been manifestly declared unto you, that no "man can fulfil the law of God, and therefore "by the law all men are condemned; where-"upon it followeth necessarily, that some other "thing should be required for our salvation, than "the law; and that is a true and lively faith in "Christ bringing forth good works, and a life "according to God's commandments. And also

"you heard the ancient fathers' minds of this "saying, faith in Christ only justifieth man, so "plainly declared, that you see that the very true "meaning of this proposition or saying, we be "justified by faith in Christ only (according to "the meaning of the old ancient authors) is this; "we put our faith in Christ, that we be justified "by him only, that we be justified by God's free "mercy, and the merits of our Saviour Christ "only, and by no virtue or good works of our "own, that is in us, or that we can be able to "have, or to do, for to deserve the same. Christ "himself only, being the cause meritorious "thereof."

Bishop Reynolds has explained the doctrine in the same manner in the folio edition of his works printed 1658, p. 251.

"Justification that is by faith is of mere grace "and favour, no way of work or merit: for the "act whereby faith justifies is an act of humility, "and self-dereliction, and holy despair of any "thing in ourselves, and a going to Christ, a re-"ceiving, a looking towards him, and his all-"sufficiency; so that as Mary said of herself, so "we may say of faith, the Lord hath respect "unto the lowliness of his grace, which is so far "from looking inward for matter of justification, "that itself as it is a work of the heart, τὸ *credere*, "doth not justify, but only as it is an apprehen-"sion or taking hold of Christ. For as the hand "in the very receiving of a thing, must needs "first make itself empty; (if it be full before, it "must let all that go, ere it can take hold on any "other thing) so faith being a receiving of Christ,

"John i. 12. must needs suppose an emptiness in "the soul before."

My good bishop Beveridge is of the same opinion. In the eighth article of his private thoughts he has these words,

"It is a matter of admiration to me, how any "one, that pretends to the use of his reason, "can imagine, that he shall be accepted before "God, for what comes from himself! for how is "it possible, that I should be justified by good "works, when I can do no good works at all be-"fore I be justified? My works cannot be ac-"cepted as good, until my person be so, nor can "my person be accepted by God, till first en-"grafted into Christ; before which engrafting "into the true vine, it is impossible I should "bring forth good fruit, for the plowing of the "wicked is sin, says Solomon, Prov. xxi. 4. "Yea the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomi-"nation to the Lord, chap. xv. 8. and if both "the civil and spiritual actions of the wicked be "sin, which of all their actions shall have the "honour to justify them before God? I know not "how it is with others, but for my own part I "do not remember, neither do I believe, that I "ever prayed in all my life time with that rever-"ence, or heard with that attention, or received "the sacrament with that faith, or did any other "work whatsoever with that pure heart and "single eye, as I ought to have done. Insomuch "that I look upon all my righteousnesses but as "filthy rags, and it is in the robes only of the "righteousness of the Son of God, that I dare "appear before the majesty of heaven."

I leave the reader to make his own remarks upon these authorities; for if he should deny the truth of the doctrine, which they maintain, yet he cannot possibly deny, that they do maintain it, and therefore if we are enthusiasts for insisting upon the free and full redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ by whom we are justified from all the miseries of the fall, then our articles, and homilies, and the most pious and learned of our bishops, have not only led the way into this enthusiasm, but have also compelled us to walk in it; and therefore the hard name should fall upon them, and not upon us.

There is another doctrine, which is mightily ridiculed at present, and that is the necessity of the grace of the Holy Spirit to change and renew our corrupt nature in order to dispose us to receive the benefits of Christ's redemption, and to enable us to live a holy and a Christian life. This is at present the very touchstone of enthusiasm. If you seem but to favour this opinion, you are immediately suspected of being a little brainsick, and the moment you speak out, you are supposed to be fit for Bedlam. And grave, sober moralists, nay, large, solemn divines, give you over for a ruined man, and your very friends begin to be afraid, that you will lose your usefulness. This treatment is unaccountable, and I believe will appear so to the candid reader, if he will but impartially consider the tenth article of our church.

"The condition of man after the fall is such, "that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his "own natural strength and good works to faith

" and calling upon God, without the grace of
" God by Christ preventing us, that we may have
" a good will and working with us, when we have
" that good will."

The first part of the homily for Whitsunday has these words,

" It is the Holy Ghost, and no other thing,
" that doth quicken the minds of men, stirring
" up good and godly motions in their hearts,
" which are agreeable to the will and command-
" ment of God, such as otherwise of their own
" crooked and perverse nature they should never
" have. That which is born of the Spirit is
" Spirit; as who should say, man of his own
" nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught,
" sinful and disobedient to God, without any
" spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous
" or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts
" and wicked deeds. As for the works of the
" Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly
" motions, if he have any at all in him, they pro-
" ceed only of the Holy Ghost, who is the
" ONLY worker of our sanctification, and
" maketh us new men in Christ Jesus."

To the same effect bishop Reynolds in his sinfulness of sin, p. 140.

" Look into your hearts, and you shall find a
" very hell of uncleanness, full of deep and un-
" searchable deceit and wickedness, full of hard-
" ness: no sins, no judgments, no mercies, no
" allurements, no hopes, no fears, no promises,
" no instructions, able to startle, to awaken, to
" melt or shape it to a better image, without the
" immediate omnipotency of that God which

"melts the mountains, and turns stones into sons "of Abraham."

In the same strain bishop Beveridge, whom I admire so much, because he was as great an enthusiast as myself, says,

Resolution III.

"I am resolved, that as I am not able to think "or do any thing that is good, without the in- "fluence of the divine grace; so I will not pre- "tend to merit any favour from God, upon ac- "count of any thing I do for his glory and ser- "vice."

"And indeed I may very well put this resolu- "tion among the rest, for should I resolve to "perform my resolutions by mine own strength, "I might as well resolve never to perform them "at all: for truth itself, and mine own woful "experience hath convinced me, that I am not "able of myself so much as to think a good "thought: and how then shall I be able of my- "self, to resolve upon rules of holiness, ac- "cording to the word of God, or to order my "conversation according to these resolutions, "without the concurrence of the divine grace."

If the reader will weigh these authorities carefully and impartially, I am very certain, that he will acquit me of the charge of enthusiasm: for upon their evidence every minister of the church of England is bound to believe, that all men fell in Adam, and that free and full redemption is offered to all men in Jesus Christ, by whose good Spirit our fallen nature is to be restored, and we may have grace and power to live a holy and a

Christian life. This is my faith. In this I hope to live and die. And if our court brethren reckon me an enthusiast for embracing it, are they not dissenters for rejecting it? For do they not dissent from the articles and homilies of their own church, and from their own subscriptions? And an enthusiast, dress him up in ever so ridiculous a light, is a more amiable character, than a dissenter of this stamp, who sets his hand to one thing, and his heart to another, who subscribes to what he does not believe, and who has most solemnly engaged before God to build up those very doctrines, which he is trying to preach down. An enthusiast, with all his mistakes, may be an honest man, but such persons are—what shall I call them? Surely not honest men. Reader, give them their proper name. Suppose the church of England had forced us to subscribe to enthusiastic doctrines, and we were enthusiasts enough to believe them, certainly we are less blameable than these persons who do not believe them, and yet do subscribe to them, rather than not be candidates for the high honours and revenues of the church. If they despise me, I shall not envy them. Let me be poor with a good conscience, and let them be rich. Let me be a despised enthusiast, and let them be highly honoured. May God make me thankful for what I hope for in the other world, and let them enjoy as much as they can get in this.

And now reader, let me ask thee one plain question, and I beg of thee to answer it impartially. After what has been said, dost thou really take me to be an enthusiast? if thou dost,

only consider, that what thou callest enthusiasm in me is the doctrine of scripture, and of the articles and homilies of the church of England, and of her soundest bishops and ministers in her better days. But if thou givest me this hard name, because my brethren do not preach up the same doctrines which I do, how is that my fault? If they pay no regard to their subscriptions, why shouldest thou load me with reproach for their crime? if they dissent from the church, is that any reason why thou shouldst dissent from it, or why thou shouldest think the worse of me for not dissenting? but if thou wilt nevertheless call me an enthusiast, without any reason, nay against all reason, then I will learn to bear it. And may God forgive thee, as I do from my heart, but I pray thee read no farther; stop here; throw the book into the fire, and it will save thee a good deal of vexation; and when thou art more open to conviction, perhaps I may lay something before thee that may be of service. In the mean time farewel.

But, reader, if thou dost not take me to be an enthusiast, I thank thee for thy good opinion. Peruse the following lectures, and compare them with the doctrines of scripture and of the reformation, and I doubt not but thou will be fully convinced of the antiquity and soundness of what is here advanced. Only let me give thee a friendly caution against being misled by a set of infidel writers, who pretend to give characters of books which they never read, in a thing called The Monthly Review, in which I have seen every sound doctrine of Christianity ridiculed

and blasphemed, and every damnable heresy openly defended and maintained. I expect no favour from these men. I desire none. To be spoken of well by them would be indeed reproach; their abuses will do me service, and they may load me with enthusiasm, I will carry it patiently, and would suffer any infamy or torment upon earth, rather than be answerable for their horrid blasphemies against Jehovah and his Christ. And I hope, reader, that the evidence, which I have laid before thee, will prevail against the scandal of these monthly reviewers. If thou art as indifferent about what they say of me, as I am, it will not move thee at all; but thou wilt think the better of me the more I am abused by them. And whenever thou seest an author degraded and vilified by them, if thou wilt take my advice, buy the book, depend upon it there is something very excellent in it, and I dare promise thou wilt never be disappointed.

I have nothing more, kind reader, to offer thee at present, but to commend thee to the grace and blessing of almighty God, who will, I hope, accompany thee in the reading of these lectures, and render them the means of making thee more thankful to Jesus Christ. And if thou dost indeed receive any benefit from them, give him all the glory. I expect no reward but to be remembered in thy prayers. And if thou wilt always mention me in thy addresses to the throne of grace, then I shall be bound to pray for thee. And may God hear us both, and enrich thee and me with all his graces and blessings in heavenly things through Jesus Christ.

A

PRACTICAL COMMENT

ON THE

HUNDRED AND SEVENTH PSALM.

SERMON I.

PSALM cvii. 1, 2, 3.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever: let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy: and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

THE book of Psalms is a treasury of divine knowledge. It contains a complete collection of sacred hymns, which were composed in praise of the blessed Jesus—whose miraculous birth—whose life and actions—sufferings and death—resurrection and ascension—and investiture and supreme power on the throne of glory—his gathering the church out of all lands—and protecting it to the end of the world, against its enemies—and then putting it in possession of eternal glory—are the subjects here treated of. And they are the most noble and elevated subjects in themselves, and besides they are the most interesting to every believer.

Every part of them is full of wonder and miracle, which deserve his greater attention and esteem, because each of them was done for his salvation. And the author, who undertook to write upon these subjects, has not fallen below their dignity: he has recommended them to us by all the graces of language, and the sublimity of sentiment. His poetry is worthy of himself, and raises up to the merits of that adorable person whom it celebrates: for it came from heaven. The Psalms were not the composition of king David, or the flights of his poetical imagination; he was only the scribe, who copied them from the dictates of the all-wise Spirit: they are indeed the inspiration of the Almighty, whose the matter is, and from whom the words themselves proceeded. And if any persons doubt of it, let them take any one description of nature out of the Psalms and compare it with what the best heathen authors have said on the same subject, and they will see reason enough to be abashed and confounded at the abject poverty of the human genius, when put in competition with the infinite perfection of the inspired volume. And how should it be otherwise? The heathens had no such subject, nor no such inspirer. They were ignorant of the person and excellencies of the great deliverer of mankind, and how then could they sing his praises? Or if they had known of him, yet they had no infinitely wise author, no eternal Spirit to dictate to them: their highest poetry was but the work of men, and of very ignorant men too: but this collection of hymns was indeed the work of God, and coming from him, it is as much superior to any human composition, as the infinite Author is superior to his creatures. On this account it deserves our greatest esteem and veneration, and we cannot value it too much; since we have here a richer treasury of heavenly knowledge, than is any where else to be met with. And may we look upon it in this light, and treat it accordingly, may it be our continual study and delight, until we enter into the spirit of these divine hymns, and reap all the instruc-

tion and profit from them, which God intended they should be the means of administering to his church.

And I hope the same Spirit who recorded this particular hymn, which I purpose to explain in the course of these lectures, will be graciously pleased to accompany us in the explanation of it, and to give us his blessing. He left it upon record, as a lesson of gratitude, to inspire us with thanksgiving and praise to our blessed Saviour, and we always want to be stirred up to the practice of this duty. Our hearts are strangely averse to it—they are by nature unholy and unthankful—and whatever we may talk of our fancied moral rectitude, and how pleasing a thing it is to be grateful to one another, yet with respect to God we are not, nor is it pleasing to us to endeavour to be grateful: for we are always, every moment of our lives, receiving mercies from God; but how few moments do we spend in making proper acknowledgments for them? And they who endeavour the most to be sincerely thankful, yet often find their affections cold and languid, and want fresh motives to warm and inflame them: and even they, who have the greatest knowledge of the abundant mercies of God their Creator and Redeemer, and have a grateful sense of them, yet freely confess, that they are not so grateful as they could wish, and it grieves them to find, that they do not love God in so perfect a degree as they ought to love him. And therefore the subject of this Psalm will be useful to us all: we all stand in need of every assistance, which can help us to render proper thanksgiving and praise to our sovereign Lord and Saviour. And the holy Spirit here offers us his assistance: he left us this hymn to be the means of inspiring us with grateful hearts, and he will doubtless accompany his own means with his own grace. May he help us to meditate upon it with devout and humble tempers, that He, who is now in the midst of us, and from whom no secrets are hid, may dispose us to make a right use of his sacred word, and may pour

down his grace plentifully upon us, filling our souls with praise and gratitude to the God of our salvation.

Before I enter upon the distinct consideration of the several parts of the Psalm, I judge it will be useful to lay before you a general plan of the whole, that you may afterwards more readily follow me, when I come to particulars. And this shall be my present subject. Upon the first reading of the Psalm every believer will observe the principal scope and design of it, which are contained under these four points.

First, We are called upon to be thankful for redemption in the three first verses.

Secondly, From the 4th verse to the 33d, the reasons for our thankfulness are assigned, which are taken from God's redeeming us from the lowest state of sin and misery. And

Thirdly, From his manner of protecting us after we are redeemed and brought into his church, from the 34th to the 42d verse. And

Fourthly, In the two last verses we have the application, exhorting us to study and to understand those mercies of redemption, that we may be full of thanksgiving and praise for them.

This is the general plan. The Author is the holy Spirit. The subject is thanksgiving to Christ the Redeemer. The motives, here urged, to incite us to practise this duty, are taken from the many great and inestimable blessings of redemption. In order to give us clear and just ideas of this redemption, the holy Spirit has selected four images from nature, to represent the exquisite distress and misery of man in his natural state; they are the most striking images, which he who knows our hearts could set before us, and they are so highly finished, that they want no grace or ornament which infinite wisdom itself was able to give them. He compares us while we lay in our natural fallen state, first to men who have lost their way in a desolate wilderness and are ready to perish with hunger; secondly, to men, who are fallen into the pit of dark-

ness and the shadow of death, where they lay bound in misery and iron; thirdly, to men, who have such a weak and vitiated appetite, that they lothe even the smell of wholesome meat; and fourthly to men, who are in the utmost distress at sea in a violent storm. These four images put together make a complete picture of our miserable fallen condition; and the persons who are in this condition, are supposed in the Psalm to be brought to a deep sense of its misery—they feel their guilt, and dread its punishment—conscience is awakened and alarmed—and the smart and anguish of it grow insupportable. This seems very afflicting, but it is the work of God. He makes them feel their misery, that the sense of it may force them to seek relief, where only it is to be found, for no sooner do they send up their petitions to the throne of grace, than the almighty Saviour instantly sends them deliverance, as it is remarked in each of these four instances, that when they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, then he delivered them out of their distress. He was disposed to grant them help, long before they were willing to receive it. And such was his redeeming love, so abundant were the riches of his mercy to those distressed objects, that he not only delivered them, but also bestowed upon them every manner of thing that is good. Although he had freely lifted them up from the lowest state of sin and misery, yet he never once upbraided them with their former wretchedness, never withheld his loving kindness, nor stopped the current of his favours; but pardoned them, and justified them, and still went on sanctifying them, until he placed the crown of eternal glory upon their heads. Oh! what a love was this! what infinite mercy was it to take these miserable sinners from the vilest sink of corruption, and to exalt them to be the most glorious saints in heaven! Does not this call aloud for your gratitude? Is not this the highest instance of God's redeeming mercy—of that very mercy which is said to be over all his works: for it is to us sinners, above them all in

degree, and beyond them all in duration. And how then can we refrain from that just tribute of praise, which the holy Spirit calls upon us under each of these four instances to pay to our great deliverer. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men. After these four instances of man's exquisite distress and misery by nature, and of his full and perfect recovery by grace, the Psalmist goes on to describe the flourishing state of the Gentile church, when the Jewish should be cast off and rejected. And this part of the Psalm is like the preceding, elevated and sublime. From the 32d to the 39th verse, the Christian church is represented under the image of a well-watered country, where the face of nature is all verdant and blooming, where the earth produces its grain, the trees their fruit in great abundance, where you see plenty smiling around you, and peace securing the possession, and grace giving a relish to the enjoyment of this happy scene. God thus turneth the wilderness into a standing water—and the dry ground into water-springs, and there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may sow the field, and plant vineyards, which may yield them fruits of increase: he blesseth them also, &c. Such is the Gentile church, but the Jewish, now cast off and rejected, is compared to a desolate wilderness, where there is neither standing water, nor water-springs, where you see nothing growing, not the least verdure appears. There is not one single field sown with grain. Not one flourishing tree lifts up its fruitful head, neither the olive nor the vine take root in this barren soil, so that there is neither wine to make glad the heart of man, nor oil to make him of a cheerful countenance. The whole prospect is one dry desolate wilderness.

And this part of the Psalm is fulfilled. The Christian church has been in this flourishing condition, and the Jewish church is now like a sandy wilderness—neither refreshed with the dew of heaven, nor made fertile by the streams of divine grace; and for want of

their genial influence, it is so parched and burnt up, that nothing grows either for use or ornament.

And the same gracious Governor and Saviour of the world, who rejected the Jews, and cast them into this barren wilderness, because they rejected him, and cast him off from being Lord over them, can and will also humble us in the same manner, if we be guilty of the same crime. The present wretched state of the Jews is a standing lesson to those persons, who will not receive Jesus for their God: and may his grace dispose them to make a right use of this lesson, lest it should soon be exemplified in their own destruction: for we of this church and kingdom have much to fear from our national infidelity. Several churches and kingdoms have been destroyed for this crime, and the holy Spirit in the 39th and 40th verses of this Psalm declares that this is the common method of our Lord's providence. Whenever a people after various calls and admonitions from heaven (and we have had many such lately) still remain incorrigible in their deistical opinions about Christ's divinity, and their treasonable practices against him, then his good Spirit no longer strives with them, but gives them over to a reprobate mind.—And again they are diminished and brought low, through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. The Christians are certainly diminished and brought low—they are diminished in number, and brought low in circumstances, insomuch that we have great reason to apprehend our candlestick may be soon removed, and the light of the pure gospel may shine no more among us. Were it not that our God is good, we might expect to be finally cut off: but the mercies of Jesus are infinite. He has borne with us long. Oh! that his long-suffering may not be wearied out, but may have the desired effect, and lead us to repentance. So iniquity shall not be our ruin. Blessed Jesus, spare us a little, and let our people have one more offer of thy grace and mercy, before the destroying angel be sent to visit us, and cut us off.

After this striking account of the various states and revolutions of the church, there follows in the 41st verse, a most sweet promise to the few poor followers of the Redeemer—Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction—the poor in spirit he removes out of the reach of affliction—the God, in whom they trust will protect and keep them safe amidst public calamities. No evil shall come nigh to hurt them. When a nation is visited for their infidelity, and is scourged with the sharp rod of war or pestilence, then the destroying angel shall have no power over them. Their almighty God and Saviour will encamp around them; and then says the prophet, "Though an host of men were set "against me, yet would not my heart be afraid, and "though there rose up war against me, yet will I put "my trust in him." He trusted in God's promises, and he had good reason: for he has engaged to be an impregnable wall of brass around his faithful people, when they are threatened with persecution or distress; and must not these persons be quite out of the reach of evil, who are surrounded with a brazen wall, and the Almighty himself guards and defends it? And this was his promise to Jeremiah, and through him to every believer in the same circumstances, Jer. xv. 20, "And "I, says God, will make thee unto this people a "fenced brazen wall, and they shall fight against thee, "but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with "thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the "Lord." He will save and deliver his people, and they shall be at peace, while the rest of the world is at at war: for he setteth the poor on high out of the reach of affliction, and then it follows, he maketh him households, like a flock of sheep. No shepherd can watch over his flock with a more tender care, or provide better for their welfare, than the great shepherd and bishop of souls provides for his flock: under his most affectionate and almighty protection, each of them is so completely happy, that he can truly declare —"The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack

"nothing." And having thus experienced the love and care of the chief shepherd, how can they withhold from him, that just tribute of praise and gratitude, which he demands?

These are such great and weighty points, and we are so nearly concerned in them, that we ought not to pass them by unnoticed: for our present and eternal salvation depend on our interest in them, and therefore they should be constantly in our thoughts, that by meditating upon them properly, they may be the means of inspiring us with continual gratitude. And the holy Spirit recorded them in this Psalm, for this very purpose, and every believer applies them to the same end. His redemption—the guilt and misery from which he was redeemed—the free grace of the Redeemer—the great and endless blessings which he purchased for us freely, and which he bestows without money, and without price—blessings truly inestimable—in this world the greatest we are capable of receiving—in the next world the highest he has to give, and of the same duration with himself, even infinite and eternal blessings; who can think on these blessings without thanksgiving? For what must your hearts be, if there be any little dirty groveling object upon this earth, which engages your thoughts, and fixes your affections in preference to these infinite and eternal blessings? Oh! what low creatures are we, notwithstanding our boasted dignity, and fancied rectitude? How abjectly base are we, to prefer shadows to substance, and time to eternity? To spend our lives in the concerns of this perishing world, and to have no thought or care about the business of the eternal world? This is so irrational and absurd, and so monstrously wicked, that it is indeed sinking ourselves below the beasts that perish. And although never did more men act this low part, than at present, yet was there never more boasting of the dignity of human nature. And what is the worst of all, our moral rectitude, and our other high metaphysical notions are so far from setting us right, that they indispose us to re-

ceive the only remedy which can cure us. Where nature fails, what can come in to our aid, but grace! and the grace of God is now an exploded opinion. To talk of it is mere enthusiasm, and to urge the scriptures which speak of it, and which maintain its necessity, this is called religious rant and madness: for the metaphysician wants none of the aids of grace to lead him into all truth, nor does the moralist want any assistance from grace to enable him to practise the whole duty of man. And it can be to little purpose, to persuade persons under these strong delusions to think seriously about their redemption, and to take a view of their misery without it; for they are prejudiced. They love and cherish the opposite opinions. And to work upon men of these tempers, requires some power superior to human. God alone is equal to it. And may he open the eyes of this deluded generation, that they may be disposed to hear the comfortable doctrines delivered in this Psalm, and to receive them in such a manner, that they may see the wonderful mercies of God in redemption, and may, together with the righteous, rejoice and give thanks. And when this great and happy event shall be brought about, (may our almighty God and Saviour effect it soon,) then it follows in the 42d verse, All iniquity shall stop her mouth. The adversary shall be silenced. The enemies of our Lord, seeing his tender care and watchful providence over his people, and finding all their attempts against them unsuccessful, shall hold their peace. They shall be silenced if not convinced. They shall be confounded at the wonders, which the Lord shall work for the salvation of men, and shall have no power to object, either to the Redeemer, or to his redeemed people—All iniquity shall stop her mouth.

O! that will be an happy day! when shall we see it? When shall iniquity be struck dumb? We hear it daily in our streets uttering hard speeches against the Lord and against his Christ—against them, although our Lord's divinity be secured by the fundamental laws

of this land, yet we have volumes upon volumes published—against them the more polite part of the world retail the daring blasphemies of these volumes—and against them the common people begin to suck in greedily the blasphemies of their superiors. When shall we see an end of these impieties? O God let it be soon. Let iniquity soon stop her mouth, and let it never be opened again, to object to those wise and gracious methods, by which thou hast decreed to bring many sons unto glory through Jesus Christ.

I am now come to the 43d verse, where the holy Spirit calls upon every reader to meditate upon the great subjects treated of in this Psalm, "Whoso is "wise will observe these things,"—whoever has a true taste and relish for spiritual matters, and is blessed with the true wisdom that is from above, he will observe these things. He will make his remarks upon them with judgment. He will meditate upon them often, study them much, and delight himself in them greatly: and therefore having this Psalm, and the other scriptures for his direction, whereby he may investigate and trace out the ways of providence, it will be the whole bent of his soul to attain this wisdom. And there is no part of the subject, which affords more curious, and at the same time more interesting meditations, than the view of the wonders which God hath done for the redemption of man. Every time they are judiciously reviewed, we see fresh matter for adoration and praise. Our hearts grow warm with the sense of them, our affections kindle, and our love to our most blessed Redeemer is inflamed. Whoso is wise will meditate thus to his profit, and he will so observe, so remark what he hears and reads, as to grow the wiser for hearing, and the better for reading. And would to God every one of us was wise to observe the great points of our redemption. The holy Spirit calls upon us to remark them, and he declares that we are not wise, unless we observe them. Whoso is wise, will observe these things. If this be the only wisdom, O

how few of us are wise indeed—how very few are wise in the judgment of the holy Spirit. Most of us are wise enough in other matters, and are deeply read in what does not concern us; but in this great point we are very babes. We have not learned our first rudiments. And certainly we have been too long children in understanding; it is now high time to seek for wisdom, and there is no wisdom worth seeking but that which is here mentioned, viz. such wisdom as enables us to understand the wonderful works of God in our redemption, and then disposes us to practise what we understand, and further gives us the power as well as the will to live up to it. And does wisdom, true and perfect wisdom, like this, grow upon our earth? Hear what a venerable patriarch thought of this matter, "But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the "place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price "thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living," Job xxviii. 12. This was Job's opinion. If you refuse to subscribe to it, tell us, where is the true wisdom to be found? Is it taught in any of the schools of modern philosophy? Can the metaphysician soar high enough to the regions of this wisdom, and bring it down to mortal view? Or can the professors of ethics teach it us among the rules of their morality? Alas! alas! it is far above the reach of their highest attainments even to discover it, and much more to practise it: for the subjects on which it is exercised are the high and deep things of God, of which philosophy can know nothing. The great apostle gives this reason, (1 Cor. ii. 14.) "But the natural man (and would to God "philosophers were not such) receiveth not the "things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness "unto him: neither can he know them, because they "are spiritually discerned." And this spiritual discernment is the wisdom that is from above. It is not a learned attainment, but it is the gift of the holy Spirit, and the proud philosopher so much disdains to seek it from his grace, that he calls it extravagant en-

thusiasm, even to suppose that the holy Spirit will give it. But if this be enthusiasm the scripture is full of it. "The Lord, says Solomon, giveth wisdom, out "of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding," Prov. ii. 6. and it is written in the prophets—"And "they shall be all taught of God." And again in the New Testament; "if any of you lack wisdom"—What shall we do—go and study systems of ethics, and read volumes of morality? No. We must take a method, that is now reckoned the highest madness of enthusiasm. "If any of you lack wisdom, says St. James, "let him ask it of God." How strangely this sounds —Ask it of God, what! is he the only giver of this wisdom? He is. For he giveth to all men, who ask it in faith, liberally, and upbraideth not. Let these men, who are wise above what is written, call it what they please, to ask wisdom of God: yet these promises are clear and full, and the humble Christian rests upon them, and knows them to be infallible: for he has experienced their truth. And may the almighty Spirit so bring down and humble our natural pride, that we may all have this happy experience, and may find the last words of the Psalm verified in ourselves—whoso is wise will observe these things, and they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord, i. e. they shall know it clearly and fully, and they shall have a lively sense of it upon their hearts: for they had before made their remarks upon it, and had laid together their observations, and had applied them to use, and then the knowledge became experimental. And the original word, as well as the meaning of the passage, justifies this construction: for the verb which we render, and they shall understand, is in the conjugation hithpael, which is peculiar to the sacred tongue, and which is used here to denote, that they should build themselves up by this understanding; it should produce its proper effects upon themselves, and the end of knowing it should be fully answered. By which means it could not be a matter of mere science or dry speculation, but

would produce many great and blessed consequences—enabling them to taste and see that the Lord was merciful, and filling their hearts with thanksgiving and praise for all his mercies.

I have now laid before you the general plan of the whole Psalm—you see the great subject here treated of is redemption—and the proper disposition of mind, with which we are to consider it, is a thankful heart—and the holy Spirit recorded this sacred hymn to be the means of exciting in us thankfulness. And may his grace and blessing go along with these lectures upon it, and bring them home with such power and evidence to your hearts, that his gracious intentions in recording it may be fully answered. And if it be the sincere desire of your souls, if you indeed wish to find profit from these lectures, then I will only detain you, while I give you two or three short exhortations, relating to the general plan, which I have laid before you.

The first is an exhortation to the reading of the Psalm which I hope you will frequently do in private. It is an abstract of the whole Bible: for the two great subjects of the Old Testament and the New, are man's sin and misery by nature, and his recovery by grace, and these are here clearly, though briefly discussed. You will therefore greatly profit from reading it if you remember the four chief parts of what it consists, viz.

First, An exhortation to thanksgiving, in the three first verses, for redemption.

Secondly, The reasons for our thanksgiving from the 4th to the 33d verse, relating to man's misery before redemption. And

Thirdly, Reasons relating to Christ's manner of governing the church, after it is redeemed, from the 34th to the 42d verse. And

Fourthly, The application, exhorting us to study and to understand these mercies of redemption, that our thanksgiving may flow from a grateful heart. The

more you read the Psalm in this view, the better you will understand it, and the more reason you will find to admire its excellencies. And

Secondly, I would not only exhort you to read it much, but also to pray for that humble, teachable temper, which alone can render the reading of it profitable to your souls. It is the word of God; it is the instruction which the all-wise Spirit has provided in order to inspire you with love and thankfulness to your most adorable Saviour. And when he vouchsafes to instruct you, hear with all humility, and learn of him the words of eternal life. Let his will be yours—his commandments your delight. But

Thirdly, Let it be chiefly remembered from whence the blessing of all is to come: for neither can the humble frame of mind, nor the benefit arising from it, be attained by our own abilities. They must both come from one and the same Spirit. God must first teach us the grace of humility, and then enable us to reap profit from it: for he is the giver of every good and spiritual gift. So that whenever you begin to read this or any other portion of scripture, if you desire it should be profitable to your souls, always look up to the holy Spirit, and desire his gracious assistance. This was the prophet's method, "Lord open thou mine "eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy "law." And these wondrous things we may also behold, if we read the law of God as he did, with humility and prayer. And if you desire to see the wonderful wisdom of God, in the plan of your redemption, you must use the prophet's words—Lord open thou mine eyes to see it: for you could no more see this wisdom, unless the day star was arisen and shone bright in your hearts, than you could see those outward objects, unless the light of the sun shone in your eyes. And therefore convinced of this, let so many of us as lack wisdom, now ask it of God; and I know of no words more significant and expressive, nor yet more devout and pious, than these of our

own church, which I shall apply to the present occasion.

O almighty and eternal Spirit, who hast caused this sacred hymn to be written for our learning, send down thy blessing upon our studies in it. And grant that we may in such wise hear it, read it, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SERMON II.

Psalm cvii. 1, 2, 3.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: For his mercy endureth for ever: let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy: and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

In the last lecture I laid before you the general plan of this sacred hymn. The great subject of it is thanksgiving. The motives to induce us to be thankful are taken from the mercies of God. We are bound to bless and praise his holy name for every instance of his goodness, but above all for that inestimable instance of his love, in redeeming us from the lowest state of sin and misery, and then freely bestowing upon us pardon and peace in this world, and eternal life and glory in the next. The holy Spirit insists chiefly upon this instance, trying to awaken in us some sense of gratitude for these blessings of redemption. His arguments are the most likely to work upon our hearts, and therefore I will endeavour to open and explain them, trusting to his guidance, and hoping for his blessing.

And may he now take all our hearts into his protection, and drive away every vain intruding thought, which would either dissipate our attention, or distract our affections; and give us, O holy Spirit, the hearing ear, to know what it is to be thankful, and the understanding heart to be able to practise it, that when we finish our present meditations, we may be the better for them, and may be the more disposed to join in praise and thanksgiving to Jesus Christ our most adorable God and Saviour.

The holy Spirit has set the blessings of redemption

before us in so clear and striking a light, that they who are not affected with the view of them in this Psalm, must be dead to all sense of gratitude. But I would hope there are not many such among you. Every one of you may not perhaps be actuated by the most lively and warm sentiments of thanks to your blessed Redeemer, but you have no objection against having your hearts more inflamed with his love; rather you wish your hearts were more his, than they are; and that your affections were placed and fixed upon him with more delight. Come then ye who are thus disposed, and hear how many powerful motives the holy Spirit has used to inspire you with sincere gratitude to the God of your salvation. "O give thanks unto the "Lord—for he is good—for his mercy endureth for "ever." Thus he begins the Psalm calling upon you to practise the sweet duty of thanksgiving, which arises from our experience of the Redeemer's mercies, and therefore we cannot but receive great delight, whenever we so remember his mercies as to find still stronger motives to bless and praise him for them. And this is what we are called upon to practise in the first words—O give thanks—and the duty may be thus defined. Thanksgiving is a grateful expression of praise, arising from an heart sensible of the mercies of redemption. Because I shall always use the word in this sense, I must desire you to remember, that by thanksgiving I mean a grateful expression of praise, &c. It is such a grateful expression of praise, as comes from the heart: for no man will praise God until he has some sense and perception of God's mercy, and praise is not a lip-service, it does not consist in uttering a set of thankful words; it is not the praise of the mouth, but of the heart. Religious praise is the service of the affections, and flows from true and hearty love to that object which we praise: for we are always ready enough to praise the thing that we delight in. Whatever is the dear object of our affections, on it we are lavish enough of our praises. The heart will command all the facul-

ties to be where its treasure is—attending upon it with their tribute of praise. And if Jesus the Redeemer be our treasure, then we shall constantly attend upon him with the praises of a grateful heart: but he cannot be our treasure, until we desire to have some interest in him, and therefore I add in the last words of the definition that the heart must be sensible of the mercies of redemption: for it is certain we cannot be disposed to thank God for mercies, of which we have no desire to taste, neither indeed will we thank him, unless we have a lively perception, and are perfectly sensible of his mercies; consequently our thanksgiving will be according to our sense of them. If we find him bestowing upon us great and numerous, and unmerited favours, then our thanks will rise in proportion to what we experience. But still he, who has no sense of God's mercies, can have no motive to offer him any thanks: because thanksgiving is only expressing with the mouth, and the other faculties what the heart feels; and therefore if the heart, which is the spring, be not moved, it is impossible the other faculties should have any motion. The Psalmist says, "O praise the Lord, for it "is a good thing to sing praises unto our God, yea, a "joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful:" here he supposes, that we must first rejoice in the mercies of God, before we can find it a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful for them; because we cannot return him praises with joy for that, in which we have found no joy. It is as impossible for us to rejoice in that thing, of which we have not an affectionate sense and perception, as it would be for a dead man to rejoice: and therefore thanksgiving can arise only from a grateful heart, which is sensible of the blessings of redemption.

This is the nature of the duty; the reasons for practising it follow—O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good—he is essential goodness, being the origin and fountain from whence all created goodness flowed. Goodness in the deity denotes that disposition, whereby

he is inclined to communicate happiness. It was owing to this beneficent attribute, that he created the beautiful system of the world out of nothing, and made all the living creatures in it to share and partake of his goodness; and therefore after he had finished the works of creation and formation, he pronounced them all to be very good. And they were good, and they continued so, until sin corrupted them. For sin brought in all evil which is the opposite to goodness, and then the remembrance of God's former goodness only aggravated our guilt, and made our evil more inexcusable: and before our guilty consciences could be set at rest, we must have a firm reliance upon some more amiable attribute than goodness, which we sinners had offended against, and which does not imply any disposition to forgive the offence. God had been good to the innocent, but he must be just to sinners. If he had freely exercised his goodness to us while innocent, yet when we offended, we put ourselves out of the reach of his goodness, and then justice took place: and when justice was extreme to mark what we had done amiss, what could sinful wretched man hope for? Nothing from goodness: because its former favours had been abused and repaid with ingratitude; therefore guilt and misery must have been our portion for ever, unless some more gracious attribute than goodness, should be revealed to us, and therefore the holy Spirit makes mercy, even eternal mercy, wait upon goodness, that it may become a proper subject of thanksgiving, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for "his mercy endureth for ever." Goodness was shewn to the innocent—mercy is for the guilty: and we can thank God for the goodness of creation, when we have experienced the mercies of redemption. Mercy is that disposition in the Deity, whereby he is inclinable to relieve the miserable: it is the attribute of pity and compassion, which can be exercised only upon them who are in distress. Mercy has for its object sin, with all its miserable consequences; and it is exercised in

removing them; and the person by whom it is exercised is our most compassionate high priest Christ Jesus, to whose mercy it is owing that we were not consumed: for when goodness could no longer employ its kind offices for us, then our merciful God was pleased to bring into execution that gracious plan of redemption, which had been contrived before all worlds, and by which many sons were to be brought into glory. The holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, out of infinite love and compassion, were pleased to agree upon this plan, and to sustain distinct offices in the œconomy of it, and as their persons are equally infinite, their œconomical actions must consequently be equally infinite. God the Father covenanted to demand perfect satisfaction for sin, and to accept the perfect satisfaction made by the obedience and sufferings of God the Son, which he covenanted to make in our stead, and as our representative in the human nature. And God the holy Spirit covenanted to render the obedience and sufferings of Christ effectual to believers, and by his grace to carry on the whole work of redemption in their hearts. St. Paul assures us, that the covenant of grace, which is the fountain of all mercy, was made before the foundation of the world, and this he repeats in several of his epistles. The Psalmist teaches the same doctrine, and frequently calls upon us to thank God, because his mercy is for ever and ever—because his mercy is everlasting—and in the next text, because his mercy endureth for ever; the word endureth is inserted by the translators: for there is no verb in the original; neither in strictness of speech could there be any; because there was no time, wherein this mercy was not exercised, neither will there be any time when the exercise of it will fail. It was begun before all worlds, when the covenant of grace was made, and it will continue to the ages of eternity, after this world is destroyed. So that mercy was, and is, and will be, for ever, and sinful, miserable man may always find relief from this eternal mercy, whenever the sense of his misery

disposes him to seek for it. And does not this motive loudly call upon us to give thanks? Because there is mercy with God—mercy to pity the miserable—and even to relieve them—although they do not deserve it: for mercy is all free grace and unmerited love. Oh! how adorable then and gracious is this attribute? How sweet is it and full of consolation to the guilty? May God bring all the comforts of it to your hearts, and if you desire, if you would know, what these comforts are, ask the redeemed of the Lord, and they will tell you, that his mercies are great beyond description. They can say, upon their own experience, that they have found the mercies of redemption to be in number, in value, and in duration, more and greater than they can express: and to their experience the holy Spirit refers you in the 2d verse, The redeemed of the Lord shall say so—they shall say that he is good, and that his mercies are eternal. What then is this redemption of which they speak in such high terms? And why do they make it the chief subject of their thanksgiving? The reason follows, because he redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. Moses has given us in the law a clear and full idea of what we are to understand by the word *gal*, here rendered *redeemed*. If any person was either sold for a slave, or carried away for a captive, then his kinsman, who was nearest to him in blood, had the right and equity of redemption. But no other person was suffered to redeem. And such a kinsman is called the redeemer, when he paid down the price for which his relation was sold to be a slave, or paid the ransom for which he was led captive. And there is another remarkable instance in the law, wherein it was provided, that in case any person was found murdered, then the nearest to him in blood was to prosecute the murderer, and to bring him to justice, and this nearest relation thus avenging the murder is called by the same name a redeemer. And how beautifully is the office of our great Redeemer represented under these three instances? He was to us such a redeemer in spirituals, as

these were in temporals: for sin had brought all mankind into slavery and captivity, and had murdered us. We are slaves to sin, and captives to Satan: St. Paul confesses both—sold unto sin, says he, and led away captive under the law of sin. And in this state of bondage and captivity we had a most cruel tyrant to reign over us, even he who was a murderer from the beginning, and who employed us in those slavish services, where we could find no peace in time, nor any rest to eternity: for he gave us no wages but death—death of the body in this world, and death of the soul from God in the next world for ever. O miserable man, who shall deliver thee, who shall redeem thee from the body of this death? Thou art entirely, eternally miserable in thyself; but thou mayest thank God, through Christ our Lord, that there is a redeemer who is able to save thee. He has every qualification which the law required in a redeemer, and he is besides almighty: for he is true and very God, equal in all things with the Father and the holy Spirit: and as soon as sin was in the world, he entered upon his gracious office of redeemer: for he was the lamb slain in type and figure from the foundation of the world. And when he had a body prepared for him, wherein he was to be slain indeed, and was made flesh of our flesh, then he completed the legal character of a redeemer. When he was pleased to unite our human nature to his divine, then he was nearest of kin to us. By this wonderful union he became our brother, and next to us in blood. And thus he was perfectly able to fulfil the law of our redemption, which suffered none to have the right and equity of redeeming, except the nearest kinsman. And to this our God condescended. O! amazing instance of his divine love. That God should be united to man and partake of our human nature, that we might partake of his divine, this is the great mystery of godliness. We can never adore, never praise him enough for it, because by it we receive full redemption. This most high

God, who was also man, united in one Christ, came into the world to redeem us. And the same person being both God and man, must merit for us as God, in what he did for us as man. Accordingly by the merits of his obedience and sufferings he paid the price of our redemption, and we were no longer the servants of sin; and by his most precious blood shed upon the cross, by his death and resurrection, he overcame both death, and him who had the power of death: and by delivering us in this manner from slavery and captivity, he fulfilled the third part of the redeemer's office: for Satan was the murderer from the beginning, who had given both body and soul a mortal wound of sin, which was certain death, and eternal misery. And the Redeemer came to avenge the murder. He took our cause in hand, as being our nearest kinsman, and it cost him his own life to avenge ours. He shed his own blood upon the cross to avenge our blood, and he died that we might be brought back to life, and then he rose again to demonstrate his victory over the infernal murderer. And he has now all power in heaven and earth, that he may effectually redeem every one, who desires to be freed from the slavery of sin, from the captivity of Satan, and the power of death. Such is our all-sufficient Redeemer! And when we know and taste of his redeeming love, how can we then forbear to be thankful? Since he has redeemed us from the hand of the enemy, we cannot be silent in his praises: we must speak of them. He has been so good and gracious to us, that it would be acting against our own sense and feeling, if we did not praise his holy name: for we were in vile slavery to sin, and he redeemed us —we were in cruel captivity to Satan, and he redeemed us—we were under the power of death temporal and eternal, and he redeemed us. And can we possibly forget how miserable we were in ourselves, and yet how happy we are become in the Redeemer? And while we remember this, what must we be, if ever we cease to give him thanks and praises? He was to us a most

blessed and most loving Redeemer: for that he, whom all the heavenly host adore, would vouchsafe to look down with pity upon our wretched state, and would descend from the throne of his eternal glory to visit us vile sinners—slaves—and captives—nay, would become our brother, our nearest kinsman, that he might be our lawful Redeemer—nay more, would come to suffer and to die for his own rebellious creatures; this was the most wonderful condescension of our Lord Jesus. And ought it not to endear him to us exceedingly? Should not our hearts overflow with gratitude, and our tongues incessantly break forth into praise for such unmerited love? O may he raise our hearts, and exalt our affections from every lower object to the contemplation of his infinite love! There never was, nor is to be, any love like our Redeemer's to us; happy are we, if there be no love in our breasts, like what we bear to him! The love of our God, coming from heaven, taking our nature, obeying and suffering in it, bleeding and dying upon the cross to redeem us—us miserable vile sinners, here is all that we can admire; here is all that we can adore. Jesus our Lord claims our highest admiration, our lowest adoration; so that his praises are a subject which can never be exhausted: for they are to be our employment and happiness for ever, and we become fitted for them, indeed we begin them, by our present thankfulness. O thou almighty Saviour, make us daily more and more thankful, that by the continual exercise of thanksgiving upon earth, we may be prepared to sing the praises of our redeeming God for ever and ever.

The next motive mentioned in the third verse, is peculiar to us heathen nations, viz. that Christ "hath "redeemed us and gathered us out of all lands, from "the east, and from the west, from the north, and "from the south." If any thing can inspire us with gratitude, this motive should prevail, because we cannot but feel the force of it, as it reminds us of that misery, from which we in particular were redeemed.

The Gentiles had wandered from God, and were so lost and bewildered in the mazes of error and superstition, that nothing but the almighty love of our Lord Jesus could have gathered them together into one church. All the heathen world lay in darkness and in the shadow of death, until the sun of righteousness arose upon them with the bright beams of the gospel: they were ignorant, immoral, idolatrous, and because they had no desire to retain God in their memory, he therefore gave them over to a reprobate mind; and then being utterly forsaken of him, they ran greedily into every kind of impurity and abominable uncleanness. St. Paul has given us a melancholy account of the Roman morals, at a time, when we have been taught, that polite learning flourished among them in its highest perfection. Read his first chapter to the Romans and you will find that they were monsters of impiety, although they could write with all the elegance and beauty of classical learning. And the rest of the heathen nations were not indeed so corrupt, but they were sunk as low in ignorance and superstition as the Romans, and particularly our ancestors in this island, who were poor blind idolaters; they used to worship stocks and stones, and to fall down before trees and groves. And when the face of the whole earth was thus covered with the dark night of idolatry and immorality, then it pleased God to send the day spring from on high to visit us. Our blessed Redeemer came to call us out of darkness into his marvellous light, and to gather us into the mystical body of his church, out of all lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. His church is the mystical body, of which he is the head, and whoever partakes of his redemption must be gathered from the world into this mystical body, and must be so united, as to become a true living member of it. It was foretold by Moses—that unto Christ should the gathering of the people be—he was to gather the dispersed into one body. And the prophet Isaiah declares—"the

"Lord God which gathereth the out-casts of Israel "saith, yet will I gather others to him: for I will "gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come "and see my glory." Happy for us these prophecies are now fulfilled. The love of our gracious Redeemer hath gathered some out of all nations and tongues: and blessed be his holy name for that he is daily gathering more, who come to Christ, and see his glory, and are thankful. O that more of the people were daily gathered unto him! we ought to pray earnestly for it, because there is no salvation for them, who are not gathered into his mystical body, and united as closely to it, as the branches of a vine are to the stock upon which they grow: for I am the vine, says the Redeemer himself, ye are the branches—abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

From hence it is evident, that our blessed Redeemer has a mystical body, into which all the redeemed are gathered, and in which they are living members, united to their sovereign head, enlivened by his grace and actuated and influenced by his good Spirit, and where the Spirit of Christ is, there is liberty—a liberty from error—a liberty from sin and Satan—a liberty from death and the grave, so that in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, there is full and plenteous redemption. And can persons who partake of this redemption forbear to be thankful? It is impossible. While they have a lively sense of the Redeemer's love, they must be speaking his praises; and they will retain this lively sense, so long as they remember from whence he redeemed them. When they lay dispersed he gathered them, when they lay in ignorance, he enlightened them. When they were in the grossest idolatry, he converted them to the worship of the true God. When they were in the sink of sin and immorality, he brought them into the ways of righteousness, pardoning their past offences, by his merits; and enabling

them by his grace to proceed in the work of sanctification: and having thus gathered them together, he united them to himself, and made them living members of his mystical body; and in this happy union, how many spiritual comforts and blessings must they find? Their hearts will certainly overflow with love and gratitude to their most adorable Redeemer, and it will be to them indeed a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful: for he claims all their affections—they would live only to him—and therefore it would be really offering them violence to hinder them from speaking of him with the mouth, what the heart feels. He is so much the delight of their souls, that they had rather cease to breathe, than cease to be thankful to their dearest Lord and Saviour. Daily will they be telling the wonders of his redemption, and giving thanks and honour unto him, so long as they have any being. And

May God enable every one of us to join our hearts and voices with theirs in giving praise and honour to our redeeming Lord. And having finished the paraphrase upon the three verses of the text, I come now to call upon you to join your thanksgiving with all the other members of Christ's mystical body. You have heard what the duty is, it consists in the service of a grateful heart, which is perfectly sensible of the divine love—having not only experienced God's goodness, but also his mercy, even the eternal mercy of the covenant of grace, being redeemed from the slavery of sin, from the captivity of Satan, and from the power of death, and these redeemed of the Lord cannot but speak with gratitude of what he has done for their souls, especially such of the redeemed, who were gathered out of all lands, who were scattered and alienated from God by sin, were in heathen idolatrous countries, out of the covenant of promise, and without hope in the world—when such persons are made to partake of the blessings of redemption, how will their hearts burn within them? How will their affections be fired, and with what a pure

flame will the sweet incense of their thanksgiving ascend up before God? Certainly their sense of this redemption will fill their souls with love and praise: for they will find themselves so happy in giving thanks to the God of all mercies, that the bent of their minds will always turn to this duty. It will become their perfect delight and joy to be employed in this part of devotion, which is by far the sweetest: for when an heart full of praise and gratitude pours out its adoration and thanks to its God and Saviour—Oh! how delightful must this devotion be? And when grace heightens it and fires and inflames our hearts with the ardour of divine love—Oh! how heavenly must this devotion be? It is indeed the highest to which we can arise, while we are in the body, and it must certainly be the most pleasing and grateful, because it is the devotion of heaven itself. It is the very service of that innumerable company of saints and angels, who stand around the Redeemer's throne, and join their hearts and voices in heavenly harmony, giving thanks, and honour, and praise unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever. And must not this be a most sweet and delightful duty, which makes up a great part of the enjoyment and happiness of the blessed in heaven? Doubtless it must even here be exceedingly sweet to those persons, who hope to find themselves happy for ever in the practice of it. So that whoever has the true Christian temper will be always giving thanks to his redeeming Lord, and will always in so doing find something of that pure delight and joy, which the glorified spirits in heaven find, while they sing the praises of their redeeming God.

O let us then lift up our hearts, and join our voices with theirs! may we catch some of those heavenly strains with which they incessantly celebrate Jesus their most adorable Redeemer. And if we can catch some of their fire, we shall then feel what kind of joy it is to be truly and sincerely thankful to our blessed Lord.

O may the Spirit of grace elevate and exalt our affections, and raise them to that high pitch of thanksgiving which may endear the duty to us, and make us in love with it so long as we live. God grant he may, that my application may come with more power to your hearts, and I shall address it to two different sorts of persons. And

First, There may perhaps be some among you, who allow thanksgiving to be a pleasant duty, but yet you find in yourselves no disposition to practise it. After what has been said of the Redeemer's love to men, O it is a cutting reflection to hear, that any of you should be in this cold dead state. Would to God there was not one man upon earth, much less any one in this place, so insensible of our Lord's mercy! but if such there be, the holy Spirit calls upon them in the text attentively to view what Christ has done for his people. The blessings of his redemption are sufficient, not only to awake them that are asleep, but also to raise up the dead in sin: for consider, he redeemed them from those enemies who had them in vile subjection and bondage. They were sold in sin, in slavery to their own natural lusts and appetites—captives to Satan, who treated them cruelly, putting them upon those miserable labours, wherein they could work out nothing but their own damnation—and sin and Satan had delivered them over to it, putting them in the power of death temporal and eternal. Such was their wretched condition. And do you believe it, or not? If you do not, you oppose God, and his holy word and every days experience. If you do believe it, why are you not thankful for redemption? There can be but one reason, and that is, you have as yet no share in the mercies of the Redeemer. You know not your interest in him: for if you did, it would be as natural to offer him thanksgiving, as it is to breathe: and so long as you withhold it from him, you are indeed in slavery and captivity, although you may not feel enough of your misery to make you wish for redemption. Sin and

Satan have so deluded you that you choose to continue slaves and captives to them, rather than to be set at liberty by Jesus Christ. And having no desire to find an interest in his redemption, you have therefore no disposition to be thankful to him for it. This is a most dangerous state: and may the eternal Spirit open your eyes, and shew you the danger of it, that you may flee for your life to the God of all mercy and forgiveness, and may find abundant reason to be thankful for his redeeming love!

But I would hope there are very few of you thus indisposed to the practice of thanksgiving, and therefore I turn myself with joy to those, who are disposed and willing to be thankful. You have heard (my Christian brethren) of the infinite love and mercy of our blessed Saviour, and how by his free grace he redeemed you from the hand of the enemy, and gathered you out of all lands into his mystical body. When you were sold slaves to sin, captives to Satan, and given over to the power of death, then your God vouchsafed to become man to redeem you; he took your flesh, for the law required that the next relation, and he only, should be the redeemer; he was made nearest to you in blood, that he might fulfil the character of a lawful redeemer. The almighty God, the creator of all things, became your brother. O astonishing condescension! and he paid down the full price for your redemption, and he paid it with joy although he bled, and laid down his life for payment. But such was the infinite value and merit of his most precious blood, that it redeemed us from slavery, redeemed us from captivity, redeemed us from the power of death. It obtained for us the most full and plenteous redemption: redemption from all the evils of sin in this world, and redemption to all the joys of the next world, for ever and ever. And finding yourselves thus redeemed from the present evils of sin, and entitled to the future joys of heaven, how can you forbear to give thanks to this most blessed Redeemer? While you find his graces and comforts in your souls,

you cannot cease praising him. I hope your praises will never cease, but it will be your joy and delight in time, as it is to be your happiness to eternity, to give honour and glory to the lamb who was slain, and has redeemed you unto God by his blood. It has been the subject and design of this discourse to bring you into this thankful frame and temper of mind. And if you are thankful, if you do but desire to be thankful, you will readily join your hearts with mine, in our requests to God, to make us more thankful, saying,

O most adorable God and Saviour, we beseech thee to send thy blessing upon what we have heard this day out of thy holy word. Endue it with thy power and efficacy, that it may reach our hearts, and may be the means of making us more thankful to thee. And give us grace, blessed Lord, to grow and improve in thankfulness, and let thy praises become more and more our delight. And to that end be pleased to let us know our interest in thy great redemption, that we all may now praise thee with joyful lips, and may join our thanksgiving with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, to laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee and saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of the glory of thy redemption: glory be to thee for it, O Jesus Christ, with the Father and the holy Spirit, to whom be equal honour, worship, and praise, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON III.

Psalm cvii. 4—10.

They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, they found no city to dwell in, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses: and he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men; for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

The general subject of this sacred hymn is thanksgiving—the motives to induce us to be thankful are taken from the mercies of redemption. And this redemption is here considered in several views, according to the several distresses from which we are redeemed, and each of these is used as a fresh motive to heighten our gratitude, and to inspire us with more praise to Jesus, our most adorable God and Redeemer.

In the last lecture I considered the three first verses, from which it appeared that the redeemed of the Lord were the persons here called upon to be thankful: they were redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and while they had any sense of these great blessings, they would never be silent in his praises, who had been to them an almighty deliverer. The holy Spirit, speaking of the same persons in the same circumstances, offers them another motive for thankfulness, in the words which I have read. It is a clear and convincing argument, and I hope the inspirer of it will carry it with conviction to your hearts. He knew what was

the most proper method to affect us, and he will certainly accompany his own methods with his own grace. And therefore every one of you may expect to reap that profit from this scripture, which the holy Spirit intended it should be the means of conveying to the faithful, if you put yourselves under his guidance and seek his blessing, while I am

First, Going through a paraphrase upon the words, and then

Secondly, Applying them as a motive to inspire you with thankfulness.

And first, The words relate to the redeemed, and describe the state which they were in, before they partook of the blessings of redemption: before they were gathered together out of all lands, and admitted into the flock of the great shepherd and bishop of souls, they wandered in the wilderness, where they were neither fed in green pastures, nor led forth beside the waters of comfort. Their spiritual state was so much like the natural condition of a dry barren wilderness, that the scriptures commonly describe it by this name. Ezekiel calls it the wilderness of the people, the desolate state of the heathen people, and not of the country—and the prophet Isaiah foretels the happy change of this desolated state of the heathen people, when the holy Spirit should be poured upon them, (xxxii. 15.) "until the Spirit be poured upon us from "on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field." When the abundant streams of his grace should descend upon the heathen world, then the wilderness and the solitary place should be glad, and the desert should rejoice and blossom as the rose—it should blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. But before this blessed change was made, we were all in a waste howling wilderness, where, the Psalmist says, we wandered in a solitary way, for by sin we had lost the way to heaven.—All flesh—the whole human nature, says Moses, had corrupted his way upon earth—and this corruption soon discovers itself, and breaks out

very early in life, for the prophet declares, that as soon as they are born they go astray, and when they grow up, they have no power to return into the right way, but are like lost sheep, which can never of themselves find the way back again into the fold, after they have once strayed from it. And therefore, in the liii. of Isaiah, our wretched condition is represented by this image—All we, not one of us excepted—all we like sheep have gone astray—we had wandered from the fold of the church, had strayed from the true shepherd, and got out of his pleasant and fruitful pastures into the desolate wilderness, where we had lost ourselves, and could find no way out of it, and no food in it: for while all the heathen world wandered in this solitary wilderness, they were hungry and thirsty, even to such a degree, that their soul fainted in them; for want of food their strength began to fail them, and they were even hard at death's door.

Now if you consider the propriety of this image only in its natural light, it is very striking, though it be very familiar. Suppose a person to be travelling through some desolate uninhabited country, like the deserts of Arabia, and unhappily to lose his way, and after wandering for some days, all his provision being gone, his spirits and his strength fail him, hunger and thirst begin to prey upon his vitals, and no hope of deliverance from any human means appearing, his soul really faints in him, and he gives himself up to despair. Is not this a scene of exquisite distress, and such as a person of the least tenderness cannot behold without being greatly moved with pity? for this miserable traveller cannot support himself much longer; his dissolution is drawing nigh, he already sinks under the fatigues of mind and body, and famine will soon put an end to his wretched life. And if you should happen to be passing by this way, soon after the breath was gone out of his body, and should see his ghastly appearance, how pale and emaciated, and frightful his dead corpse looked, then your heart would melt over him, and you

could not avoid shedding one compassionate tear. But how much more sensibly would his death affect you, if you begun to be apprehensive of this same danger; if you had also lost your way, were without food, your spirits and strength failing, and scarce any hopes left of your finding the right way again? When you thus made his case your own, your concern would be double, and you would be in the utmost distress for your own safety, seeing before your eyes an unhappy fellow creature, who perished in the same circumstances.

Now if this case, which is only a temporal calamity, and to which death will put an end, would naturally move our pity, and excite our compassion, how much more should the same case in spirituals affect us? Because here the calamity is endless, and death does not finish, but rather is an entrance and opening into eternal distress? So that if the case in common life moved you greatly, then this in spiritual life should move you infinitely more. Call up then the softest emotions of your tenderness, and compassion, and mourn over that unhappy person, whose spiritual misery is painted out and represented by the lost, starving, and dying traveller in the wilderness. You may see from what his body suffers, how much the soul of the poor helpless sinner is to suffer, who has lost his way to heaven, and who wanders in search of it without any guide or direction, and after all his labour and pains to find it out, wearied and hungry, and fainting for thirst, he is forced to give over the search: his soul is ready to perish, for want of the divine support, and of the streams of divine grace, which Christ and the holy Spirit only can give, and which are as necessary to the life of the soul, as meat and drink are to the life of the body. And if none be soon sent to this lost sinner he dies, not only to this world, but he also dies from God, and from all the glories of the heavenly kingdom—he is eternally ruined and undone. Here then is an object a thousand times more miserable, than the poor traveller who perished in

the wilderness. And can you behold, how is it possible for you (my brethren) to think of this infinitely more miserable object, and not to be infinitely more affected with it? Doubtless every one among you, who can feel for others, and has any bowels of compassion in him, must mourn over this unhappy man, who is just falling into torments, which know no intermission—no end. Oh! it is a dreadful case, beyond description distressful—God grant you may never know what it is, to be tormented for ever and ever in the flames of hell. And if you can thus pity another person in this distress, O shut not up the bowels of your compassion against your own selves: for this is indeed your own case. You are this very lost ruined sinner. Every one of you is, every son of Adam is in this wilderness—in it you have lost your way to heaven, and with the best of your natural abilities and reasoning powers cannot find it again: or if you could find it, yet you are not able to walk in it, because you are dying of hunger and thirst, whether you feel it or not: for you have no food from Christ, who says, I am the bread of life, to support your sinful souls, and therefore you must perish with hunger, and you have no grace from the holy Spirit, which is the water of life, and therefore you must perish with thirst. This is by nature the condition of every man who cometh into the world—and whoever thou art, who hast not seen thyself in this condition, thou art still in the waste and howling wilderness. Although the body may lodge in a palace, yet thy poor soul is in a desert: for if thou hast not yet found thy lost estate, thou hast not yet taken one step toward thy recovery. If thou hast not seen and felt thy misery—that thou hast lost thy way to heaven, and hast no merit to support thee, no grace to sanctify thee; if thou hast not seen this, Oh miserable man thou art blind indeed. Thou art under the strongest delusion of sin, which shews its power over thee, by thus obscuring and darkening all the faculties of the soul. But if it should please God to open thine eyes, thou wouldst, to thy amazement see

nothing around thee, but a waste barren wilderness, where thou now fanciest nature to be flourishing and fruitful. And may his good Spirit indeed enlighten your understandings, and shew you evidently your miserable state, that there may be raised in your hearts a strong cry for deliverance. And if you find any prayer, if it be but a desire, rising in your minds, to accept of full and free redemption through Jesus Christ, hear how comfortably the holy Spirit exhorts you to apply to him in your distress, as it follows in the 6th verse. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their "trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." They were in the wilderness, had lost their way, had no food, were perishing, they could only cry unto the Lord; they had no help or hope left, but throwing themselves upon his mercy to pray him to interpose in their behalf. When misery brings us thus to know and feel our wretchedness, then our deliverance draweth nigh: for God is always more ready to help, than we are to pray to him for help. And we cannot have a happier proof of his readiness to help, than in his sending us those troubles, which send us to him, and which thereby bring us deliverance. And we have great reason to be thankful unto him, and to kiss the rod, whenever its chastisements dispose us to seek his face. "I will go and return to my place," says the God of all mercy, in the prophet Hosea v. 15. "till "they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face, "in their affliction they will seek me early." How full is this passage of the most tender love and affection? You see our God sends afflictions, even to his enemies, with a design to do them good; he suffers them to fall into distresses, from which the arm of flesh cannot deliver them, that they may be brought to acknowledge their offence, and to seek his face, who is almighty to deliver. And whenever outward sufferings produce this inward humiliation, then the design of them is answered; for then the mind is righty disposed to look up to heaven, from whence only cometh help in time of need. And

they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, they saw the misery of their fallen state—they felt their guilt and wretchedness—they found no help in the wilderness of this world—and deeply abased and thoroughly humbled with the sense of their sinfulness, they cried unto the Lord for help: and Jesus heard them. The God of love heard the first sigh of their broken hearts, and before they cried unto him, he was at hand to save. He is an almighty Saviour, whose love is as infinite as his power—he is always ready to save unto the uttermost. Whoever seeks shall find his grace, either to shew him his guilt and misery, or effectually to remove them. And if any of you are now sensible of guilt and misery, make a trial of his redeeming love. Go to him with the sincere desires of your hearts to be pardoned and saved, and he will as soon cease to be God, as he will reject you. He will not cast you out. He shed his blood for you on the cross—he loved you more than his own life—he even died to save you, and he cannot cast you out. If you desire him to save you, you are saved: for they cried unto the Lord Jesus, and he delivered them out of their distresses—they had nothing to offer him but prayers and entreaties—they could only cry for pardon and mercy—this is all that they could do, and all that he wants: for so soon as they cried for salvation, he saved them. His free grace led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. They could not help themselves—they could only cry for help—and so soon as they cried to him, his free grace brought them a complete deliverance: for whereas they had lost their way, he brought them forth by the right way: his good spirit led them out of the wilderness unto him, who calls himself the way, the truth, and the life, and in him they found an abiding city, whose builder and maker is God: this city is the church, which Christ hath purchased with his own blood, and whoever is admitted into it, and is a true living member of it, can want no manner of thing that is good: for Jesus Christ the Redeemer,

the head of the church, has provided every thing that can make his members happy in time and to eternity. In time they have his good Spirit to enlighten them, and to shew them the way out of the wilderness, his merits to justify them, his grace to sanctify them; they are holy and happy, and in eternity they will enjoy these heavenly blessings, to which they have already a sure right and title by the merits and free grace of Jesus Christ. And

When such persons remember, what they formerly were in themselves, and what they are now made in him, how can they forbear to be thankful? How can the redeemed of the Lord be silent in the praises of the Redeemer, when they consider out of what a desolate wilderness he brought them, when they were lost and bewildered in it, were so hungry and thirsty, that their soul fainted in them; must not the very remembrance of these blessings inspire them with thankfulness? When nothing but death and endless ruin lay before them, he was pleased of his own free grace to hear the very first cry, which they sent up to him for deliverance, and he came with all the tender mercies of our God to save them. He turned the wilderness into a paradise—he put his revealed directions into their hands, and sent his good Spirit into their hearts to enlighten them, and to lead them into the right way—he gave them the bread of life to allay their hunger, and the waters of grace and comfort to quench their thirst—and having thus blessed them with all spiritual blessings, how can they—how is it possible they should be silent in his praises? While their hearts are full of gratitude to him, shall they not be telling with their mouths of the wonders which he hath done for their salvation? Doubtless, they will be speaking of their most adorable Redeemer all the day long, for this is so just a tribute of praise, it is so easy and pleasant a return; and besides, it is the only return we can make for his inestimable blessings; that this will and must make him. And this is the grateful return which the holy

Spirit calls upon us, in the next words, to make to our redeeming God—" O that men would therefore praise " the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful " works to the children of men." He has done wonders indeed—he never failed in the miraculous blessings of his free grace, O that we may never fail in thankfulness for them. But certain it is, that we have all failed, and the best of us lament our failing the most: for thankful, as he deserves, none of us are. It is a rule of common life, that thankfulness should be proportioned to the benefits received, and whoever does not act up to this rule is reckoned basely ungrateful among men. In religion the same rule is just and equitable. But because Christ has been so infinitely merciful that our thankfulness cannot be proportioned to the merits received, yet we are therefore more inexcusable, if we are not as grateful as it is possible for us to be; for to whom men give much, of them they always require the more; and to whom Christ has forgiven much, of them he requires the more love and praise. The more we receive, the greater is our debt, and to consider that we can never repay it, should most effectually stir us up to be thankful. Oh! how earnestly should we pray for, how incessantly should we be seeking the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to enable us to rise to higher degrees of gratitude. His merits will be still above our praises, let us rise ever so high; but let us not stop, until the heart be full of thankfulness, and every faculty of the mind and body be ready to give honour and glory to their redeeming God. " O that men " would therefore praise the Lord Jesus for his mer- " cies, and declare the wonders which he hath done for " the salvation of men: for he satisfieth the longing " soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." In these last words you see, how the prophet exalts the free grace of God in order to raise and exalt your gratitude: for these sinful lost travellers in the wilderness could do nothing to deliver themselves—they had tried every thing in their power, and could not succeed—they

were helpless—faint—and miserable—they have only spirits enow left to cry unto God. And what haste does mercy make? For the moment they cry, Jesus was at hand to save. The God of love came with all the blessings of his redeeming grace, and poured them plentifully upon these poor sinners, when he had made them sensible of their want of them, and they applied to him for relief. For he satisfieth the longing soul—the longing soul is that which finds itself empty—which is convinced of its nothingness and wretchedness, and so soon as it can confess itself to be quite destitute of every saving grace, does indeed hunger and thirst after the graces of Jesus Christ, then he never fails to satisfy this empty soul, and to fill this hungry soul with goodness. Such is Jesus the God of our salvation, and thus wonderful is he in his mercies to the children of men? O that they would therefore praise him for his infinite, his eternal mercies—and grant, O blessed Jesus, that many persons, who hear me this day, may have reason to praise thee. Bring them by thy grace, O almighty Redeemer, out of the wilderness of sin and error, and let this scripture be fulfilled in every one of us, that we may join in giving thanks to thy holy name now and for ever.

Thus much for the paraphrase upon the words; they contain a brief history of man's fall and misery, and of his restoration through Jesus Christ; which are described under these particulars.

First, The lost state of men by nature.

Secondly, They are brought to a right sense of it, and cry to the Lord Jesus for deliverance.

Thirdly, He hears them and delivers them out of all their distresses. And

Fourthly, The tribute of thanks due to him for this great deliverance.

To each of these points I will speak, as briefly as I can, by way of spiritual use and application. And first the lost state of men by nature is here represented under the striking images of persons, who have lost

their way in a barren wilderness, where they are ready to perish with fatigue and famine. Now, my brethren, let me put this plain question to you, and may God put it to your hearts—have you ever seen yourselves in this lost state? If you have give glory and thanks to Jesus your almighty Redeemer. If you have not, you are in the utmost danger, and yet you live secure—you are still in your sins, with all the guilt of them about you, and destruction lies before you—you are on the very precipice—in one moment you may fall into eternity—where nothing but endless torments can be your portion: and what a strong delusion of sin is it, that you, who fear and dread a little bodily pain in this life, should not be under the least apprehension about the endless pains of body and soul in the next life? What is able thus to infatuate you against your own reason and your senses? You have not surely persuaded yourselves, that the account which the Psalmist gives of your sinful miserable state is not matter of fact? If you have fallen into this delusion, hear what the word of God, and the voice of reason, and the sad experience of every day, loudly bear witness. The scripture is clear, that all we, every son of Adam, all we like sheep have gone astray—we have strayed from the paradise of God into the wilderness of this sinful world: and further the scripture teaches that thay are all gone out of the way—all—not one excepted, "they are all gone "out of the way, they are altogether become abomi-"nable, there is also none that doeth good, no not one." And the consequence of our wandering is thus described,—"destruction and misery are in their ways, and "the way of peace have they not known." The sense and meaning of these passages you will not dispute, their authority you do not deny: and how then can you resist their evidence, since the reason of mankind, Jews, Heathens, and Christians, confirms it, and every day's melancholy experience renders it more clear and self-evident? If you will not believe this cloud of witnesses you must believe nothing: for you may as well

doubt, whether there are any such beings as men, as whether they be fallen sinful beings. The one is an object of sense as much as the other. And therefore unless you have taken your rest in absolute scepticism, and are quite settled upon the lees and dregs of infidelity, you must allow that mankind are sinful and miserable. Sin is the parent of all their misery: for it separates them from God, who is the parent of all good. It separates them in this world from his grace, and it will separate them in the next world from his glory for ever and ever. And now (my brethren) being convinced of your lost state and sinful condition, what do you resolve to do in consequence of this conviction? Will you go away from hence with this conviction upon your minds, and sin on as securely as you did before? God forbid. Your guilt would then be increased, your case would grow more desperate, you would then choose misery—even eternal misery, with your eyes open. O what a dreadful infatuation would this be! may the Lord Jesus keep you from it, and may his heavenly grace second my intreaties, that you may now—this very moment, see your lost state by nature, and cry out unto him in the anguish of your souls for his grace! and if it be but a deep sigh from the heart, or a short prayer, Lord Jesus save, or else we perish—this the God of love will hear, and answer. For it follows in the next words of the text, "when they cried "unto the Lord in their trouble, then he delivered "them out of their distresses." They could do no more to deliver themselves, than you can do; they could only cry to him in prayer to save them, and according to the greatness of his mercies he freely gave them full redemption. This is the established method of his proceeding. So soon as he sent his grace to shew them their wretchedness, and to dispose them to cry to him for deliverance, he was ready and able to save them to the uttermost; and he is now as ready and as able to deal thus graciously with you. If you cry unto him for help, he will save. How sweetly does he

invite, how powerfully does he persuade you now to cry aloud for his redeeming grace. "Call upon me, "says he, in the day of trouble, so will I hear thee, "and thou shalt praise me." Therefore now call upon him, let the sense of your guilt and misery now make you earnest and importunate in your requests—call upon him in the day of trouble, and what an encouragement does he give you to persevere—So I will hear thee—I shed my blood for thy guilt, and my grace is almighty to remove thy misery—only seek them in prayer and I will hear and answer, and thou shalt praise me—thou shalt have reason to praise me for the abundant mercies of my free and full redemption. O that men would therefore praise the Lord Jesus, &c.

I have been very short upon the three last particulars in the text, viz. the sense which these sinners had of their misery, their crying for deliverance, and the tribute of thanks due to Christ for delivering them, because I shall have frequent occasion to speak upon them in the following parts of the Psalm. But enough I hope has been said to lay open this most sweet and comfortable portion of scripture, and to warm your hearts with the consideration of it. You see that the mercies of our God are above our misery. Though by nature we wander like sheep in the barren wilderness of this world, yet we have a most tender shepherd, who is always seeking to bring us back into the fruitful pastures of his church. Though in this wilderness we can find no abiding city, yet within the fold and pale of his church, we may find rest unto our souls. Though we have no spiritual support in ourselves, yet his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, and when his good Spirit applies the merits of them to our hearts, then we have true spiritual life abiding in us. Though our souls fainted within us, while we wandered in the wilderness, yet Jesus the God of all consolation will refresh the fainting soul with his reviving grace, and will supply it with every manner of thing that is good through the ages of eternity. So that he is more mer-

ciful than we are miserable—and in this respect his mercies are over all his works, for that he only waits until we have seen our misery, and are humbled enough to cry to him for relief, and then he shews he is at hand, a God to save. O that you may all this day experience his almighty power, and have fresh proof of his redeeming love—and every one of you who desires it, will readily join with me in requesting his blessing on what you have now heard.

O most mighty God and Saviour, we acknowledge and confess our lost estate by nature: for all men have wandered in the wilderness out of the way, and have found no abiding city—they could find no way out of the wilderness—no place to rest, and no food to support them in it, hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted in them—But so soon as the sense of their misery disposed them to cry to thee, blessed Jesus, thou wast ready to deliver them out of all their distresses. Now almighty Lord deliver us, and extend the same mercies to this whole congregation—and let not one person among them leave this place, without being first convinced of his own misery, and then of thy all-sufficiency to redeem him from it. Bring what has been said upon these truths home to all our hearts, and carry it with thy divine power and efficacy to our consciences, that we may now cry to thee with one voice—Lord Jesus save, or else we perish. Hear us thou God of love, and be unto us an almighty Saviour, that we may bless thee with grateful hearts, for having brought us up this day out of the wilderness of the world, here to the house of the Lord—where we found reason to be thankful as long as we live, and to declare the wonders which thou hast done for our salvation. Grant this, O most adorable Jesus, to the glory of God the Father, and by the influence of the holy Spirit upon all our hearts, now and for ever. *Amen* and *Amen.*

SERMON IV.

PSALM CVII. 10—17.

Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the most High: Therefore he brought down their heart with labour, they fell down and there was none to help; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses; he brought them out of darkness and out of the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! for he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

THE holy Spirit sets before us in these words a second image of our misery by nature. He has called upon the redeemed of the Lord to be thankful to Jesus the God of their redemption, and in order to exalt and raise their thankfulness the more, he gives them four images, in which the misery of fallen man is placed in different views. In the first he is represented as lost in a wilderness, where after much wandering and weariness, fainting with hunger and thirst, he is just ready to perish. But finding no help upon earth, and being brought to a deep sense of his distress, he cries unto the Lord in his trouble, and Jesus was at hand to save: for so soon as the sinner was disposed to accept, the Saviour was willing to bestow free and full rêdemption. This was the subject of the last lecture. We have in the words before us a second image of man's fallen condition, in which the distresses of it are greatly heightened, and if I were able to paint the exquisite misery of it, so that you might see it in a strong light, it could not fail of having a great influence upon every uncon-

verted person. I will therefore endeavour to set it before your eyes in as striking colours, as I am able, and I hope the same good Spirit who inspired this passage will be pleased to accompany us this day in the consideration of it, and to supply the imperfections of my discourse by his divine grace in your hearts. O eternal Spirit now preside over us, and shew thyself to be a God, by applying the doctrine with power and energy to every one of our consciences, while I am

First, Laying open the sense and meaning of the words, and

Secondly, Considering their spiritual use and application.

It must be remembered, that the words belong to the redeemed of the Lord—they are the persons called upon to be thankful—and the motives to excite their thankfulness are taken from a review of their miseries and distresses, before they obtained redemption: and these miseries and distresses were of so many various kinds, and so very numerous, that they could not be represented to the life in one picture. In order to set them before our eyes in full proportion, it was necessary to draw them in different scenes: and therefore the holy Spirit has given us in these four paintings a perfect description of man's sinful and miserable condition by nature: in the first he is represented as having lost the way to heaven, and wandering in a wilderness, weary with fatigue, faint with famine—ready to perish—in the second, his distress is heightened, for he falls into a pit of darkness, and the shadow of death, where the enemy finds him, and puts him into close confinement, binding him with the heavy chains of affliction and iron. The scripture and every days experience confirm this description, for the first words, such as sit in darkness, are true of every son of Adam in his natural state. Sin cut off all communication between God and us, and thereby rendered us quite ignorant and blind in all spiritual knowledge; for if the eye of the mind have no light from the eternal Sun of righteousness, it is in the

same state with the eye of the body, if it have no light from the created sun in the heavens—so that all the spiritual world was covered with gross darkness and blindness, until the light of life arose: for thus saith the Lord God, speaking of Christ, "I have given thee for "a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes—to "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that "sit in darkness out of the prison-house." Now it is certain, that the Gentiles to whom Christ was given for a light, were not literally blind—they had good eyes, and could see outward objects clear enough—but the eye of the soul was entirely blind, insomuch that Christ came down from heaven miraculously to open it. And he sent out his apostles for the same purpose, and when he called Paul to the apostleship, he gave him his commission in these words, "I send thee now unto the "Gentiles to open their eyes, and to turn them from "darkness to light." You cannot suppose, that all the Gentiles were blind, to whom St. Paul was sent, and yet they had eyes which were not open, until the gospel enlightened them, and these were the eyes of the mind: for when the Gentiles were turned from darkness to light, then was fulfilled that which is written by the prophet Isaiah, "the eyes of the blind shall see out "of obscurity, and out of darkness"—the sun of righteousness arose upon their obscurity and darkness, and so enlightened the eyes of the spiritually blind, that they clearly discovered the right way to heaven. And the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, were by nature in this blind state; Zecharias in the gospel confesses it, "The "day-spring, (i. e. Christ,) from on high hath visited "us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the "shadow of death"—all mankind without Christ, Jews and Gentiles, not only sit in darkness, but also in the shadow of death. Such is the blind and miserable condition of sinners! Sin has subjected them to temporal and to eternal death; but because the death of the soul, when it perishes eternally from God is not an object of sense, the holy Spirit was therefore pleased to

give us a shadow of it, by the death of the body, when it perishes to this world. And both these kinds of death entered into the world by sin; and what the body suffers by dying to this world, is indeed but a shadow of what the soul suffers when it dies from God in the next world. And yet it is a very just and expressive shadow: for as the body, when it dies, has no longer any sense of perception of the outward objects of this life, but totally perishes from the light and spirit of the animal world, and from all the joys and comforts which they administer, so the soul, when it dies from God, has no longer any sense or perception of the inward objects of its life, but totally perishes from the eternal light and spirit of the heavenly world, and from all the joys and comforts which they administer. Thus bodily death is a shadow of spiritual—and temporal of eternal. I might trace the likeness in more particulars, but this may suffice to explain what the Psalmist means, by the shadow of death. He supposes the mortality of the body to be a shadow of the sad estate into which sin brought the soul. All mankind is subject to this mortality, which is but the shadow of death, for in the death of the body we have a mournful picture of the more miserable death of the soul, which is the substance of death: this is the reality and substance of what the other is but a shadow. Oh what a distressful scene then is this! here is nothing but darkness and the shadow of death—a body mortal and perishing, and while it lives is in bondage and the fear of death, terrified at the very approach of the shadow, and how much more in dread of the substance. And yet this distress is still heightened, for these poor sufferers are so chained down, that they cannot escape from the power of their enemies; they cannot stir one step out of this darkness and shadow of death; because they are fast bound in affliction and iron. Sin brought us into this darkness and shadow of death, and then chained us down to these miseries. The scripture frequently speaks of the bonds of sin, and describes man in his

fallen state to be as much a slave to sin, as if he was really chained down. And indeed a chain of the hardest iron, or of the toughest steel, is more easily broken, than a long habit of sin: for the soul is then fettered and bound, as much as if the man was chained to the gallies, and yet he endures it willingly, although no galley slave is put to harder service, or has a more cruel and inexorable tyrant over him. Ought not this woman, says Christ, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond? And Satan hath bound the whole human race, as well as this woman: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage; and he overcame us all by sin, and then bound us with the strong chains of it, which no human power can loose. He only who overcame Satan, is able to release his prisoners. And the Psalmist, in the 68th Psalm, enumerating some of our Lord's great deliverances, says in the 6th verse, "he "bringeth out those which are bound with chains;" and the prophet Isaiah declares, "that he should open "the prison to them that are bound." The scriptures are to be spiritually applied: for Christ never released any prisoners by breaking open the prison doors, and snapping their bands asunder. We meet with nothing of this kind in his life. But we read frequently of his delivering men from the bonds of their sins, and freeing them from Satan and death. From whence it follows, that unless our great Redeemer had come to break off our chains, we must have laid bound in affliction and iron for this life, and then have been reserved in everlasting chains under darkness in the next.

This is the true image and portraiture of every son of Adam. While he remains in his natural fallen state he is in darkness, and the shadow of death, fast bound in misery and iron. And how terrible is this situation —to live in darkness without one ray of divine light and comfort—to be under the dismal gloom and shadow of death, and to be bound down to this misery by Satan, with his strongest fetters and chains—cer-

tainly this is a scene of deep distress? and the view of it should lead us to inquire, how the gracious Author of our being should suffer mankind to become subject to it: for he cannot be the cause of our misery: so that it must have been some great and heinous offence, by which we brought ourselves into these distresses. And let the Psalmist relate the reason—"they "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, being "bound in affliction and iron, because they rebelled "against the words of God." "Because they rebelled." This was the grand rebellion for which the head of the family was attainted, and his attainder corrupted the blood of all his children. Our first parents took up arms against the supreme majesty of heaven, and vainly imagined that they could find knowledge and happiness contrary to his declared will, and in opposition to his almighty power; and they carried this vain imagination into act; they listed themselves under the devil's banner, and set themselves in battle array against God, defying his threatenings and his vengeance. In comparison of this great rebellion, all others have been only weak plots and conspiracies: for this was the highest crime man could commit: because to whom much is given, it is just and equitable of them to require the more. And God had given to Adam greater gifts and abilities, with innocence to enable him to use them aright, than to any of his descendants, and had with the most tender affection counselled him against that very temptation, by which he was most liable to be seduced—therefore when he rebelled against God, and contemned the counsel of the most High, it was the most horrid rebellion that a creature could commit against its Creator. And it was far from cruelty in God, it was an act of justice without severity, to suffer him to fall into the pit, which he had dug for himself, and there to be taken by the enemy, and committed a prisoner to darkness and the shadow of death, and to be fast bound with misery and iron. But it may be enquired, why are we subject to his misery? Because

we could not but be involved in his guilt. His treason corrupted his blood, and being corrupt in the fountain, it could not but be corrupt in the streams, which issue from it. We see a standing instance of this in the book of nature; a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. And we have a clear evidence of it in the book of God: which declares, that coming from a corrupt stock, we are altogether corrupt and abominable, being by nature children of wrath. And we have incontestible proof from the equity of our own laws, which not only punish treason with the loss of life in the traitor himself, but also with the loss of honours and estate in his descendants to the latest posterity. Now to deny that we are corrupt by nature against these evident proofs, is a full demonstration of our corruption. And he is fallen the lowest, who thinks he is not fallen at all; for he who lives and acts as if he was not a fallen creature, must be farthest from recovery, and consequently must be most miserable: it is still rebellion to think to be happy in opposition to the revealed will of God; and every infidel because he attempts this, is a rebel; he is a traitor convict; and every infidel society is an army of rebels united under the banner of their chief; who tempts, deludes, infatuates them, and hurries them on, sometimes even against conviction, until the long suffering of God be wearied out with their rebellions, and he suffers them to fall into the hands of the enemy, who binds them with everlasting chains under darkness. O may the God of mercy open their eyes, before they perish! blessed Jesus shew them their guilt, and humble them under the sense of it; that finding their misery they may fly to thee for succour: for this is the usual method by which our Lord reclaims the unconverted and the infidel, as it follows in the Psalm; "Therefore "he brought down their hearts with labour, they fell "down and there was none to help." He brought down their rebellious hearts by labour, he visited them with outward afflictions, under the weight of which they fell down, and there was none to help; they could not

find any help upon earth; all worldly comforters failed them, and then they began to see their wretched condition. Their outward misery made them feel their inward. They found themselves in darkness, which no ray of science, nor the brightest beams of human learning, were able to dispel. They found themselves in the shadow of death, from the terrors of which, all the moral and civil virtues put together could not deliver them. They found themselves fast bound in misery and iron, and all the powers in the earth could not break their chains. Finding their distress, and seeing no creature able to help, they were thereby disposed to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. And indeed, their proud hearts were so thoroughly brought down and abased, that they were led to cry unto the Lord in their trouble and he saved them out of their distresses. The Psalmist in the 13th verse makes this the happy effect of their affliction; it disposed them to seek God's favour, and he is always found of them who seek him. So soon as they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, he was at hand to save them from their distresses. The almighty Saviour came and brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bonds in sunder. And thus he gave them complete redemption. Darkness fled at the approach of the eternal light—and the shadow of death was turned into the light of life at the appearance of the living God—and the bonds brake in sunder, when Christ came and proclaimed liberty to them that were bound; and being thus enlightened and set free from the bonds of sin and Satan, and delivered from the shadow of death, after they have obtained so free and full a redemption, how can they be silent in the Redeemer's praise? they then have a lively sense of his redeeming love in their hearts, and it would be acting against their own sense and feeling, if they made him no return of gratitude. It would be unnatural. Nay it is indeed impossible for men to partake of the blessings of redemption, and not to be thankful to their Redeemer. "O

"that men would therefore praise the Lord for his "goodness, and declare the wonders which he hath done "for the salvation of men." Wonders indeed! for he brought them from darkness to light, from the shadow of death to the life eternal, and from the bonds of misery to a crown of immortality. And shall they not praise him for these wonders? shall they not speak with their tongues what their hearts feel? Doubtless they will be telling of his salvation all the day long; and lest they should ever forget it, the Psalmist once more reminds them of their great deliverance: for he hath broken the gates of brass, says he, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Remember from whence ye were redeemed and be thankful—were ye not in a prison, that was fortified with gates of brass, and bars of iron, and were ye not chained down in the most dark and lothesome dungeon of this prison? do you not recollect what horror you were in, when you found yourselves in this distress, and had none upon earth to help you? And yet you no sooner cried to Jesus for help, than he heard your cries and came: he brake open the gates of brass, and snapped the bars of iron in sunder; your chains fell off; and he brought you out of the prison-house, and set you at liberty. And certainly you do not want to be persuaded to be thankful for such a deliverance? Or to be grateful to such a deliverer? Your praises should flow with as much ease and as naturally as your breath. God grant the one may endure as long as the other, so that of his praises there may be no end.

I have now finished the paraphrase upon the words, and I come 2dly, to the spiritual use and application of them. The doctrine which they contain is this. Every son of Adam in his natural state before he is redeemed is in darkness, and the shadow of death, and is fast bound with the chains of sin and misery, and there is no help for him upon earth—the almighty God and Saviour alone is able to deliver him. This is the doctrine which I have supported from other passages

of scripture, and from experience. And now, my brethren; let us examine ourselves upon it, and try to make it useful and profitable to our souls. The proper steps to this end seem to me, first, to believe the doctrine—2dly, to desire to experience the truth of it, and 3dly, to find the happy experience of it in our souls, and then we shall have reason indeed to be thankful.

And first, The belief of the doctrine is the chief point in the Christian religion. For we must be made sensible of our fallen state by nature, before we can think of its being renewed by grace. The sick only want a physician. The sinner only wants a Saviour; and therefore we can have no motive to apply to him for his salvation, until we find ourselves ruined and undone by sin. So that this must be first and above all things settled in our minds. The doctrine of our redemption stands upon our belief of the fall; and if man in his fallen state was not in darkness, then we want no Saviour to enlighten us: if he was not in the shadow of death, then we want no Saviour to deliver us from death: if he was not fast bound with chains by sin, and Satan, and death, then we want no Saviour to break our bonds asunder. We must first believe ourselves to be in these distresses, before we can seek for redemption. And therefore, my brethren, do you indeed believe, that you are in your fallen state, in the distresses here described by the Psalmist, or do you not believe it? Do you see no darkness in the human mind? Do you know none who live in the fear of death? And were you never tied to some favourite bosom sin, which you found it harder to break off, than it could be to break the strongest chains of iron? Certainly you must have remarked something of this kind? And if you have, how can you account for it, otherwise than upon the Psalmist's principles? If mankind did not lose the divine light and life by sin, how came all this spiritual darkness into their minds? If they did not lose the love and favour of God by

sin, how came they to be subject to death, and to live all their lives in fear of it? If they have not contracted a proneness to evil, how happens it to be so difficult to break the bonds of sin? No satisfactory account can be given of these things, but what is taken from the scripture history of the fall, and therefore why should you not believe the scripture history? If you consult the infidels they have nothing to offer upon these points, their advocates are silent. The heathens have written much, and reasoned more upon the subject, but without success. Their best writers own, that they were not able to clear it up. But upon the Christian plan the difficulties vanish at once. The scripture account is rational and consistent. And why then, my brethren, do you not believe it? You have the word of God and the voice of reason, and melancholy experience attesting the depravity and corruption of mankind. You cannot deny, but that they are depraved and corrupt. This is a self-evident truth. And what remedy is there for it? Can God look upon such sinful polluted creatures with approbation? No. He cannot. The infinite purity of his nature will not suffer it. And he will not. He has declared, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and he who has once sinned can never make himself holy, and consequently he can never see the Lord—unless there be a Redeemer, who has holiness to give: for God's purity, and sin's impurity set God and the sinner at an infinite distance. And how shall he ever approach to God, unless there be a Redeemer, who has infinite righteousness to impute to the sinner, and thereby enable him to draw near to God; here is our only remedy. The Redeemer, and he alone, is able to repair all the evil effects of sin. Our souls must have remained for ever in darkness, unless the divine rays of the sun of righteousness had enlightened them. Our bodies would have lived here in the shadow of death, unless the Redeemer had brought life and immortality to light. And both body and soul would have been bound with

the chains of sin here and for ever, unless our almighty deliverer had set us at liberty. O let us receive him then for our Redeemer and our God? Finding and feeling our misery and distress without him, let there be raised in the heart a strong cry for his salvation. Let us imitate them in the text, who cried unto the Lord in their trouble. And this desire to experience his power to redeem us was the second head of application.

If you believe what has been said of your fallen state, and yet have no desire to be redeemed from it, how do you quiet your consciences as to this absurd conduct? You do believe, that man is by nature sinful and miserable, and yet you have no desire to be redeemed from sin and misery, how inconsistent and contradictory is this proceeding? Do you choose then to be in darkness rather than light? Is death preferable to life, or bonds to liberty? Oh miserable deluded man, whom sin thus infatuates! whoever thou art, thou art self-condemned: because thou hast seen thyself fallen, and yet hast no desire to be raised up. By what arguments, what intreaties, shall I prevail with thee? How shall I touch thy heart, and win thy affections, to make thee desire, what thou knowest already thou must desire, before thou canst be happy? Blessed Jesus! this is a work above my power. Take it Lord into thine own hand, and send thine almighty grace unto the hearts of all my hearers who are in this dreadful situation, that they may be disposed to seek pardon and peace of thee with strong crying and tears, until thou save them from their distresses. Our Redeemer is a God of love: he cannot reject any person, who seeks for his redemption; seek therefore, and ye shall find. Desire, and your desires shall be granted: for they cried unto the Lord Jesus in their trouble—they only cried unto him, and he saved them out of their distresses. So will he save you, if you cry unto him for salvation. This is your encouragement, desire and pray, until you happily experience his redeeming grace, which is the third and

last point I purposed to consider. The word experience in these days of blasphemy and reproach conveys an odd idea to some persons, and I know that they cannot separate it from enthusiasm: but I have remarked, that they who ridicule the word, are entire strangers to the thing: for we mean nothing more by experience, than the knowledge of what God has done for our souls, which may be as certainly perceived, as any external object can be: for can faith be given, and the heart be changed, and all its affections altered; is it possible this should be done, and yet the man who suffers this great and total change should not know it? Can he be brought out of darkness into light, and not be sensible of it? Can he be delivered from the fear of death, and not find that his fears are gone? Can his bonds and chains be broken off, and shall he not feel that he is at liberty? Surely he must—he must know and feel it. He must have as clear an idea of it, as a poor condemned prisoner would have of liberty, if he was brought out of the dark dungeon and his chains and fetters knocked off. If you allow him to experience his deliverance, then you cannot deny the same experience to the redeemed of the Lord, whom he has brought out of darkness, and whose chains he has broken asunder. For doubtless the soul may have its experience as well as the body, and the knowledge will be as certain in one case as in the other. And it highly concerns all formal nominal Christians, and I call upon them to observe this. And I would enquire of them, how they know that they have been redeemed, if they have had no experience of redemption? Will they pretend that they were born in a Christian country, and were baptized, and have lived ever since in the communion of some reformed church: be it so. But all this entitles them no more to redemption than if they had been born among the Heathens or Mahometans: for a man born in England wants conversion as much as one born in Turkey. The same change of heart is necessary for both; and it is certain, being baptized does not

change the heart, because as children grow up we see the seeds of vice sprouting up apace, and nothing can check them but being baptized with the Holy Ghost, of which water baptism was the instituted emblem and figure: and whoever is baptized with the Holy Ghost, must as certainly experience the change it makes in him, as he can see or feel any outward object. He was before in darkness, now he is in light—before he was afraid of death, now his fears are gone—before he was chained down in a lothesome prison, now he is at liberty. How can this be, and the man not know it? is it possible to open the eyes of a blind man, and he not know it? Can he be restored to sight, and not see it? Certainly you cannot believe any thing so absurd, and yet you do believe a greater absurdity, if you think yourselves to be the redeemed of the Lord, and yet have experienced nothing of his redeeming power. Without this experience you are only nominal Christians, and I beseech you (my brethren) not to rest in the mere name of Christianity. If you have no knowledge of what Christ has done in your souls, you are only Christians in profession—you are Christians without any sense or feeling of Christianity, insensible Christians—what mere nothings are these in religion? You fancy you live to Christ, and yet you have no perception of this life, what can be more absurd? Therefore be not any longer content with the mere shadow of Christianity, nor think you have redemption, because you keep some of its outward services. These are well, but something more is necessary. God is to do the great work in your souls. It is all his. You can do nothing to it. You have only to desire and pray for his redemption. And his grace, which disposes you to desire and pray, will also do all the rest: for it is he, who worketh in you, both to will and to do—therefore cry unto him, until he work in you both to will and to do. If you cry, he will hear and answer—he will bring you from darkness to light, from the shadow of death to life eternal, and from the bonds of sin

and Satan into the perfect liberty of the sons of God. And may the blessed Jesus give you the experience of these great changes, that you may find him almighty to perfect your redemption, and then you will be thankful. Sensible of your own misery by nature, and of the blessings of his free grace, you will not be silent in your Redeemer's praise. Your grateful hearts will overflow with expressions of thankfulness, and you will live eternally to him, who now liveth in you. And so many as are in this happy state, who have tasted how good and gracious our Redeemer is, will now draw near unto him, and send up their earnest request to him for his blessing upon what you have heard. And

We beseech thee, O most adorable God and Saviour, to make this discourse useful and profitable to our souls. We confess that we were by nature in darkness and in the shadow of death, and were fast bound with the chains of misery and sin. Thus low were we fallen, and there was none to help. But as soon as we cried unto thee, blessed Jesus, thou wast at hand to save, and didst deliver us from all our distresses. We praise and glorify thee for thy free and full redemption. And grant, O Lord, to this whole congregation the same happy experience. Send thy good Spirit into all their hearts, and so entirely change them from sin to righteousness, that they, finding thee to be also their Redeemer and their God, may join with us in praising thee for thy goodness, and in declaring the wonders which thou hast done for our salvation. O thou God of love, let no one leave this place without a blessing: but hear and answer according to the riches of thy mercy to the glory of the Father and of the eternal Spirit, three persons of equal power, majesty, and dominion, to whom be ascribed equal honour and worship, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON V.

Psalm cvii. 17—23.

Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities are afflicted: their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

The subject of this Psalm is thanksgiving: the motives by which the holy Spirit tries to stir us up to be thankful are taken from redemption; which is the greatest mercy God has bestowed upon mankind, and therefore it justly demands the greatest thankfulness. But because the all-wise Inspirer of this divine hymn knew the abominable corruption of our hearts, and that we were by nature unholy and unthankful, he has therefore used several arguments to convince us. He is earnest and importunate with us. He calls aloud to us again and again, solicits, presses us, to open our eyes, and to behold the wonders which God hath done for our redemption. And to give an edge to these repeated intreaties, and to make them pierce the deeper, he has adorned them with the ornaments of language, and the graces of sentiment. The very composition has every thing beautiful and sublime, that can recommend it to our esteem; and he who knows the heart and what is most likely to make an impression upon it, has still farther heightened the subject by four paintings from nature, which he has drawn in the most

lively and striking colours. The design of each of these pieces is to represent our fallen state in the most affecting point of view, that seeing and feeling the exquisite distress of it, we may be induced to cry unto the Lord Jesus for deliverance; who never shutteth out the cry of the poor destitute, but hears and comes with all the haste that almighty love can make, to deliver and to save. The subject of the first painting is laid in a wilderness: fallen man is like a traveller, lost and bewildered in a desert, weary and faint, and ready to perish with famine. In the second piece his distress increases, for he falls into a pit of darkness and the shadow of death, where the enemy finds him, and puts him in chains, binding him with misery and iron. In the third, which we are going to view at present, you will see him laying in a scene of still greater distress. Behold him here quite worn down by sickness. See how pale, and feeble, and emaciated he looks—his strength gone—his appetite lost—his breath failing—he draws near to the gates of death. This is the affecting scene on which we are now to fix our eyes. And I hope you will attend to the Psalmist's account of the causes and symptoms of our disorders, of the proper remedy, and of the means to avoid diseases for the future. I know you all value health: nothing is dearer to you: for without it life itself is a burden; therefore hear what the Psalmist has to offer upon these points, and let this awaken your closest attention, that he does not borrow his rules from books, or from the experience of the ablest physicians, but he received them from the author of our being. The all-wise God revealed them to him, and through him to us, and may he guide our hearts, that we may receive by his grace all that profit from this scripture, which he intended it should be the means of administering to the faithful. May his good Spirit sanctify our hearts, while we are viewing the three chief parts of this highly finished painting.

First, The distress of the sick.

Secondly, Their cure by the great physician. And, Thirdly, Their grateful behaviour to him.

As to the first particular, the cause of their sickness is thus described. "Foolish men, by a course of sin "and wickedness, are afflicted and brought low." Sin was the fruitful parent of all their disorders; and though they knew it, though they saw daily sad experience of it, yet they were such fools as still to sin on, and to persevere obstinately at the expence of their own health and life. What a strong delusion was this? They found themselves weakened and enfeebled, quite worn down with labouring in the ways of sin, and yet they were so infatuated, as to persist. Might not the Psalmist with good reason call such men fools? What could be greater folly than to continue in an habit of sinning, until it had brought them so low, "that their "soul abhorred all manner of meat, and they drew nigh "to the gates of death?" A course of sin was the cause of their disorder, and in these words the Psalmist gives us the dangerous symptoms of it: food is necessary to our being: the desire of it is a natural appetite, but when nature loses the desire for that which is necessary to its very being, it must be then greatly disordered. The stomach must have been much injured, and the organs dangerously impaired, indeed the whole body must be in a very bad habit, before all appetite could be lost. But how much more dangerous are the symptoms, when nature does not only cease to desire, but cannot even bear the most innocent food? When the stomach is become so weak and tender, that it cannot digest the lightest meat, the case is then growing desperate, and there seems to be no hopes left, when it comes to the last stage here described, viz. to lothe and abhor all manner of meat. The stomach turns at the sight of it. And the man has this lothing and abhorrence of all manner of meat; what he most loved, and had the best appetite for, is now become so very offensive, that at the smell of it he grows sick, and faints away. Nature cannot support itself long under

this disorder. If this loss of appetite, and lothing even the smell of the most simple food continue, it must wear the patient out: indeed it is not always a mortal distemper; there may be an entire lothing of food, and even fainting away at the smell of it, and the patient may sometimes recover. But in the present case, the distemper had continued so long, and was grown so inveterate that there were no hopes, for they draw nigh, the Psalmist says, to the gates of death, these gates of brass, and bars of iron, with which death locks up his prisoners in the grave; and you may judge how great must be the strength of these gates and bars, since only one person was ever able to break through them, and if he had not been more than man, he could never have broken these gates of brass, nor cut these bars of iron in sunder.

This is the striking image in the text, and in order to see it in the most affecting point of view, you should visit a person in this distress. Go to his sick bed and behold him in this languishing condition, laying weak and feeble, and wearing away apace through loss of appetite: you see all the organs of the body for want of natural supplies begin to be unable to perform their proper offices. And as the bodily strength decays, the faculties of the mind also are impaired. His memory is short. He is scarce able to distinguish one object from another. If you continue for some time by his bedside, and examine all the symptoms of his disorder, it must greatly move your compassion to see him in such pain and misery. You cannot but feel tenderly for him, and the more, if you recollect, that this case may soon be your own. And if you thus bring it home and apply it to yourselves, it may be natural to give a vent to your pity, and to shed one compassionate tear over your distressed fellow creature. But if the person who is in this disorder should happen to be dear to you, a relation, a friend, as near as the wife of your bosom, you could not behold them in these agonies without suffering along with them. And I ask every

to prove that he was the almighty physician of the soul. And it is remarkable that he never rejected any person who applied to him for an outward cure, to demonstrate to us, that he would never cast out any person who should apply to him for a spiritual cure. You hear in the text, that so soon as they cried to him, he was at hand to save, and they had happy experience of the Psalmist's description of him—"He giveth them medi-"cine to heal their sickness"—He gave them a medicine which presently restored to them a good appetite. He sent his divine grace into their hearts, which took off their lothing and abhorrence of food, and then raised in them an hungering and thirsting after Christ's righteousness—and this appetite for it will always be satisfied: for blessed are they, says the almighty physician himself, blessed are they that hunger now, for they shall be filled—they shall have more grace, who have a spiritual appetite, an hungering for more—they shall be even filled with grace: for he hath filled the hungry with good things, with grace to justify, and with grace to sanctify; these are good things, including every thing that is good, short of glory.

And after the free love and mercy of our most adorable physician has raised us from the death of sin, and given us a new life with new faculties and new appetites, and our spiritual food is now grown pleasant and desirable to our souls, so that we taste it and relish it with joy; how then can we forbear breaking out into his praises, who has been so exceedingly gracious unto us? We cannot refrain. It would be offering violence in us to enjoin silence. We must be telling of what our dearest Lord has done for our recovery, and sorry we are from our hearts, that we cannot honour him, as we could wish. Our best oblations, our highest praises, what are they, how poor and unworthy a return for his inestimable love? But thou hast required them, blessed Jesus, and we present them before thee, knowing that we stand in need of thy merits to pardon our imperfect praises; O make them such as God the Father may

accept: for we now praise thee for thy goodness, and we declare to all the world, that thou hast done wonders of mercy for our salvation. And when the prophet enquired "what shall I render unto the Lord for all "his benefits done unto me?" he was led by the holy Spirit to make this resolution, "I will take the cup of "salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord:" he went to the blessed sacrament, there to offer his sacrifice of thanksgiving, and there the holy Spirit directs the redeemed of the Lord to go in the last verse of the text. "And they sacrificed the sacrifices of thanks-"giving, and delared his works with rejoicing." This was the sacrifice of the Eucharist, to which the persons, who have been healed of their spiritual maladies, go, in grateful remembrance of the numerous and endless blessings, derived to them from the body and blood of Jesus Christ; of which the sacrifices of thanksgiving under the law were expressive memorials: for at every such sacrifice the blood of some pure clean animal was shed, and there were offered with it unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and the flesh of the sacrifice was to be eaten the same day it was offered. In like manner at our sacrifice of thanksgiving, where these figures are realized, we have the sacramental blood of the most clean and unspotted Lamb of God, with which we have bread, that is verily and indeed the flesh of Christ to the faithful, when it is, like these wafers and cakes, anointed with the holy unction of the blessed Spirit: when he accompanies the outward elements with his divine grace and blessing, then we partake of the body and blood of Christ. And his body is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed—the only meat and drink which can support the soul: for without them we have no life, no spiritual divine life abiding in us. And after Christ has healed our infirmities, and restored our lost appetite, where should we go for food but to our Lord's table? Where can we receive, but from his body and blood, support to our souls and growth in grace? He

has instituted these outward signs to signify his inward grace, and has assured us, that he will do the same thing to the soul, which the elements do to the body. Upon this promise the redeemed rest. They go to the holy sacrament, both to offer their sacrifices of thanksgiving for what their Saviour hath done for their souls, and also to receive fresh pledges of his love and bounty. And whoever approaches the Lord's table with this faith, will always find occasion, when he comes from it to declare the works of Christ with rejoicing. God grant this whole scripture may be fulfilled in every one who hears, hears me, that seeing your natural sickness by sin, you may be disposed to fly to the great physician, and may receive such a perfect cure, that his praises may be your delight and joy for ever and ever.

I have now gone through the paraphrase upon the words; you have heard the sense and meaning of them laid open. They contain a most affecting image of the misery and distress of our fallen nature, which we will briefly review by way of spiritual application in these three particulars, under which it was before considered in the paraphrase:

First, The distress of the sick.

Secondly, Their cure by the great physician. And,

Thirdly, Their grateful behaviour to him.

And first, As to the distress of the sick, you have seen it drawn by the holy Spirit in the strongest colours: and his painting has an universal likeness. It does not represent this or that man, but every man; every son of fallen Adam is here painted to the life: for before he is redeemed, he lies languishing and pining away in a course of sin: his soul is in such a bad habit, as his body is in, when it has lost all appetite for food, and not only does not desire it, but even lothes it, and continues in this weak feeble condition, until it draws near to the gates of death. Now Christ is the only support and food of the sinful soul; and yet it has no appetite for him, not only does not desire him but even lothes

and abhors him, while it is drawing near to the gates of death, and it will be the Lord's mercy, if the gates be not soon shut upon it.

And now, my brethren, let me bring this point home to you. Do you indeed believe, that this is a true picture of human nature, and of every one of you in your sinful state before you have redemption through faith in the blood of Jesus? The holy Spirit who drew it, declares it is. And why should you not believe him? For it is founded upon a plain matter of fact, which you cannot deny, and that is, the universal corruption of mankind. If they be all sinners by nature which is as certain as that they are men by nature, then they are all sick, and this picture is a true likeness of them all: for sin brings the soul low, and weakens its faculties, as sickness does the body and its faculties; and as sickness takes away the appetite of the body, and creates an aversion to food, so does sin take away the appetite of the soul and creates an aversion to its food. This is plain matter of fact, and it is scripture too: for sin is the cause of this spiritual malady, and since all men have sinned, all men therefore are spiritually diseased with the pains and miseries of sin. And there is no remedy upon earth, no human means, either by simple repentance, or by morality, to heal this dangerous sickness. The divine and almighty physician is the only healer of the nations, but the moralist and the infidel want him not—the whole want no physician, but they that are sick, but they, who see and feel the evil effects of sin, earnestly seek and implore his help, and for them he has healing in his wings; as the Evangelist has remarked—and "Jesus healed all that were sick, that it might be ful-"filled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, say-"ing, himself took our infirmities and bare our sick-"nesses." And when took he our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses? Was it not when he bare our sins in his own body upon the tree? For by his stripes we are healed. When he took away our sins, he then had

power to heal us, and consequently if he had not taken our sins away, we could not have been healed; but we must have remained in the foul leprosy of our transgressions, and in such a like condition as the prophet Isaiah has described. "Ah! sinful nation, a people "laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children of "corrupters—the whole head is sick, and the whole "heart is faint—from the sole of the foot, even unto "the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and "bruises, and putrefying sores." This is a true description of all sinful people, and of every sinner in particular. And the image is just and expressive if you apply to the soul what is here said of the body: for sin makes the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint. Sin disorders all the faculties of the soul, so that from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness; they are all corrupt, and the corruption will as certainly end in the destruction of the soul, as a like total corruption in the body would end in its destruction.

But I have heard persons enquiring, how can this be? Can I be thus sick, even unto death, and not know it, and not feel it? Most undoubtedly you may. Your case may be dangerous, even desperate, and yet you may have no sense of it: for this is a spiritual disease, and the cause of it is sin, and every sin obscures and blinds the eyes of the soul, and makes its other senses gross and thick, and an habit of sin deadens them entirely, what St. Paul, speaking of the unregenerate, calls being past all feeling. So that you may be sick unto death, and yet be past all feeling. The body in the mean while may be in health, and the soul may be dying. The body may be as strong as Samson, and yet the poor soul may be languishing and fainting, and drawing near to the gates of death; and it is the nearer the less apprehensive you are of it. If sin has so blinded and deluded you, that you neither see your guilt, nor feel your danger, your case I pronounce to be at present desperate. You stand on the precipice. You are on

the very brink of ruin—one step more, and behold the pit is open. You fall. You are lost for ever. Eternal destruction is your portion. Men and brethren, take warning. I entreat you by the tender mercies of our Lord Jesus Christ to stop, and to consider your case. Unless you are in love with pain and misery, be persuaded to request of our God, to open your eyes. Let me beg of you, for I see your extreme danger, and out of love to your souls I importune you, to desire God to shew your true state. And will you not vouchsafe to send up one desire to him for yourselves? But are you fully determined to keep your eyes shut against your danger, and to go on in your sins? Would to God I knew the proper motives to awaken your consciences, and to make you sensible, that your sickness is unto death, if I did, you should not sleep a moment longer upon the brink of eternal destruction: for there indeed you lay, whether you see your danger or not. And can none of my exhortations, none of my friendly intreaties prevail with you to rouse up and to look into your own hearts, and to examine your state and condition? Cannot I prevail? If you still turn a deaf ear to me, O blessed Jesus, I will then turn to thee. Thou God of love, send thy good Spirit upon every person here present, on whom my arguments have made no impression, and shew them the dangerous malady of sin; that feeling the pain and misery of it, there may be raised in their hearts a strong cry for thy salvation. And may our most adorable God now work in you this happy change, that you may be disposed to apply for your cure to the great physician of souls,

Which is the second remark. You have heard how he treated the sick persons in the text. So soon as they cried to him for help, he came, and by a remedy which never failed restored them to perfect health; and he treats all his patients with the same love and mercy. He only waits, till they be made to see their misery, and to cry unto him for deliverance: and if it be but one deep sigh, but one short prayer, "Lord Jesus, be mer-

"ciful unto me a sinner," if it come from the heart, he will be merciful: for his readiness to relieve the distressed is the second part of this beautiful painting—"Then they cried unto the Lord," says the Psalmist, "in their trouble, and he delivered them from their "distresses—he sent his word and healed them"—The Lord Jesus himself came. The great healer of the nations heard their cries, the bowels of his compassion were moved at the sight of their misery, and that tender heart which bled for them on the cross, now melted into pity; for he desireth not the death of sinners, but rather that they should repent and live. He died to give them life, and now they are asking for it, how can he refuse it? Can he, who came down from heaven, and left his eternal throne, and laid aside his divine glory for a time; can he who went through the world poor and despised, hungry, and thirsty, and weary, can he be without love? Did not he submit to this low abasement, and to these miseries, in order that he might be the sovereign physician of sinners? And now he has laid them prostrate at his feet, humbly imploring his free grace to raise them up, is it impossible that he should deny to heal them? The crucified Saviour cannot want love—the almighty God cannot want power—and therefore whosoever cometh unto him for cure, he will in no wise cast out.

Such is Jesus—our most adorable physician—and are you not in love with his amiable character? How should it endear him to us, that he is always diposed freely to heal, and that there is no spiritual disease so dangerous and inveterate, but he has skill to heal it, nor any so offensive or odious in his sight, but he has mercy to heal it? He neither wants will nor power. And can you believe this, are you verily persuaded, that the God of love is ready to heal you of all your maladies, and will you not come to him for a cure? When the blessed Jesus invites, when he presses you to accept health and salvation at his hands, what can tempt you to reject his gracious offer? I now stand up in his name,

and by his authority now proclaim these tidings of great joy—" I will heal their backslidings, I will love " them freely." These are our Lord's own words in the prophet Hosea xiv. 4. And because he loves sinners freely, therefore he heals them freely. He requires no previous condition, but that they see and feel their sickness, and this he makes them sensible of, and then his free grace restores them to perfect health. And to such a physician, who would not apply? To a physician who is almighty to heal, and whose love refuses none that apply to him, be they ever so sick and sinful—and who does all this freely. Free grace is his only motive. And upon hearing of such a physician, and knowing that you are sinners and want his help, will any of you think of leaving the church, without applying to him for relief? God forbid. I hope none of you will be such enemies to yourselves. What! will you prefer sickness to health, and pain to pleasure? Can you be thus infatuated by sin? Is there any of you still under this strong delusion? If you are, may the almighty physician take your case into his own hands, and out of his infinite love and compassion first dispose you to seek health from him, and then freely bestow it upon you. Blessed Jesus, let thy divine power be now present to heal every one of us, that we may all join in giving thanks and glory to thy name, which is the Psalmist's third remark in the text.

I shall speak very briefly to this particular, because it concerns only those persons, who have experienced the skill of the great physician. They alone are here called upon to offer their sacrifice of thanksgiving. None can be thankful to Christ, but they who have tasted of his redeeming love; because thankfulness arises from our sense of his mercy. We must first cry unto him to save us from the mortal disease of sin, and afterwards have received salvation, before our minds are rightly disposed to be thankful. And when the almighty healer has thus graciously restored us, we can no more with this experience of his love refrain from his praises, than we can refrain from breathing: the redeemed of the Lord

praise him as freely as they breathe: for praise is as much the breath of a redeemed soul, as air is of his body. The redeemed cannot be silent. It is their delight and joy, and they are never more happy, than when they are praising the Lord Jesus for his goodness, and declaring the wonders which he hath done for their salvation. O! may the number of the redeemed of the Lord increase daily. May the honour and praise of our almighty physician spread, and be celebrated with more tongues, and with more grateful hearts. O thou sovereign healer of every sinful malady, let thy fame be more known in the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Manifest thy power to heal all the diseases of sin, but more especially manifest it to this congregation. O thou God of love, let thy power now be present to heal. We call upon thee, blessed Jesus, we earnestly entreat thee, to hear us, and grant that no one person may leave this place, until they either desire to find, or do indeed find, that thou art a most loving God, almighty to heal the greatest of sinners: and for these our prayers we desire acceptance through thine infinite merits, that thou mayest answer them to the glory of God the Father, and to the honour of the holy Spirit, the Trinity in unity, whom we worship, and adore, now, and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VI.

PSALM CVII. 23—33.

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep: For he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof; they mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble; they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad, because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

THE Psalmist in this divine hymn, calls upon us to be thankful for the blessings of redemption, and in order to inspire us with the greater thankfulness, he sets before us a perfect representation of man's misery before he is redeemed. The three first parts of this sacred painting have been already considered. We have seen, that man, in his natural fallen state, is as much at a loss to find out the way to heaven, as a traveller would be in some vast desert, where he is quite lost and ready to perish. He is as much unable to walk in the way, even if he were directed aright, being fast bound with the chains of sin, as a prisoner would be, who is shut up in a dungeon, and there bound with misery and iron. And if his chains were knocked off, and the prison doors thrown open, yet he is in such a weak lan-

guishing condition, that he cannot stir one step. He has so weakened and impaired his faculties by a course of sin, which has brought on him a total loss of appetite, and has so worn him away, that he is now near to the gates of death. These are the three beautiful images, under which the holy Spirit has drawn the picture of our fallen nature. The fourth, which puts a finishing hand to the performance, is contained in the words now read; wherein our distress is still heightened, and our danger is painted in more strong colouring. The subject of this last piece is a storm at sea, and I believe there is not in the universe an object more great and striking, nor is it possible to represent it in words more clear, or in descriptions more affecting, than what the holy Spirit has here used. May he dispose your hearts to receive the instruction which they hold out to you; that every one of you may reap the profit from them, for which he inspired them and left them upon record. And to this end you will look up to him for his grace and blessing, while I am,

First, Laying before you a paraphrase upon the words; and then,

Secondly, Applying the doctrine contained in them to your spiritual benefit and improvement. And,

First, The holy Spirit has here given us the representation of a storm at sea; which is so expressive and sublime, that the bare reading of it is sufficient to humble the pride of human genius. If one of the best heathen poets had undertaken to write upon the subject he would probably have given us a volume upon it. Whereas this sacred drawing, though it be short, is nevertheless absolutely complete. The description rises up to the greatness of the subject, and every circumstance in the order it is mentioned heightens what went before, and makes the whole so full and perfect, that they who have been in a storm at sea, and in danger of being cast away, cannot but tremble at this relation of it. "They who go down to the sea in ships, "and occupy their business in great waters; these men

"see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the "deep." We see his wonders every where; the creation is full of them. In every place, in every condition of life, we may behold evident marks of almighty power and infinite wisdom; but they who live a seafaring life, have more evident marks than any other persons: for they see the most wonderful display of the divine attributes. Upon the land we can scarce form an idea of what they feel and endure at sea, when at the word of God, "the stormy wind ariseth, which "lifteth up the waves thereof." The accidents of the storm, and the causes on which they depend, are here so justly represented, that it is not possible to see a more affecting picture. You may here behold distinctly and in beautiful order, the command of God—the action of the wind—the rage of the waves—and the distress of the mariners. God commands the wind to arise—the wind raises and lifts up the waves of the sea—the waves beat furiously against the vessel—put her in danger—and this danger raises another tempest in the souls of the poor mariners. In this chain of causes and effects God holds the first place; for he commandeth the stormy wind, and then the wind lifteth the waves of the deep. Although the wind be nothing but air in motion, yet there is no agent in nature capable of acting with greater force and violence. The sea, in a perfect calm, appears to be one beautiful and even plain, smooth as the polished marble; but the wind no sooner begins to blow, than it is ruffled and agitated. And when it blows with might and fury, it tosses up the waves, and beats them one against another with such impetuosity, that the noise is incessant, and as loud as thunder. And then heaping wave upon wave, they here swell into lofty mountains, and there sink down into deep and horrible vallies. The natural weight of the water carries it down, and the violence of the storm raises it up, and by the opposition of these two jarring elements there is formed the most dreadful conflict, which is to be seen in the universe; even on the shore,

where you are safe, yet you cannot behold it without horror. But what must be their situation who are in the midst of the storm, and over whose heads the raging billows are breaking every moment? How great must be their distress, when they find their vessel become the sport of the winds and waves, and sometimes carried up to heaven, up high into the air, and presently down again into the deep? And to give us a strong image of the confusion of the mariners, the holy Spirit adds, that they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, tossed from one side to the other, thrown up and down, and reeling about, as unable to walk upright in the ship, as a drunken man is upon the land. In this distress they find the rudder, and the sails, and the oars, of no use. The fury of the wind and storm carry the vessel where they please, and the waves beating against her with all their might, in different parts, and in different directions, shake her strongest timbers, and make such wide leaks, into which the sea comes pouring in, that the affrighted mariners are at their wits end. All their wisdom is swallowed up. The light of reason cannot suggest to them any expedient, or if it could, yet the strength and arm of flesh are not able to carry it into execution. All hope of being saved is now taken away, and their souls are in the utmost fear and dread, and melt away because of the trouble, as it is here expressed—no stability is left, no courage remains. Their minds are agitated like the ocean, and in as much confusion: for besides the loss of the vessel, and of the goods, on which they set but too great a value, they can turn their eyes no way, but they see the waves ready to swallow them up, and death awaiting them on every side. No desired shore, no favourable haven appears. On earth there is no prospect of deliverance.

This is a short sketch of the holy Spirit's description, which, how briefly soever I may have represented it, is nevertheless perfectly expressive and sublime in itself, and will appear more so to them, who have seen

a storm in its highest rage and fury: for if you have never seen one, you can form but very faint ideas of it. I judge thus from my own experience: for I have seen many storms from the shore, and thought I could have given a good description of them; but when I was afterwards really in one, and in danger, I then found that my former knowledge was very imperfect. To be in a storm at sea, is as different from seeing it from the shore, as a painted storm differs from a real one. It felt very differently to me from what it had ever done before; when I was in the midst of the waves, and was tossed up to heaven, and then down again to the deep. The sea ran so high, that I well remember, when our ship was down in the deep, between two waves, I could not see the top of the mast of a large vessel which came very near us during the storm. You may judge what a situation we were then in. I believe the stoutest heart among you would have trembled upon this occasion. If you would know how you should have behaved, put yourselves in the same situation we were in. Suppose yourselves to have been several days in a troubled sea, tossed with winds and tempests, and at last all hopes of being saved began to fail. What do you think would be your sentiments, if the storm should still continue, the vessel should grow leaky and ready to sink, and instant death was before your eyes? If you could really suppose yourselves to be in this situation, you would want none of my arguments to persuade you to seek help from God in such a time of need. Would not you pray, and intreat him with strong crying and tears to come to your assistance? O with what earnestness would your souls implore and beg him to stretch out his merciful hand, and save you from perishing! let there then be raised in your hearts the same strong crying and tears, that you may be delivered from a more dreadful storm than what we have been considering. This tempest in the natural world is but a faint image of a much greater, which sin has occasioned in the spiritual world. The

one is but a painted storm compared to the other. And to this more terrible storm you are all subject. Every son of Adam being a sinner, is embarked on a troubled sea, where the winds and waves are contrary; for it must be remembered, that this description cannot be peculiar to sailors, because the whole Psalm is spiritual, it belongs to the redeemed of the Lord, and all his redeemed people do not literally go down to the sea in ships, nor do they meet with storms from the rage of winds and waves; and yet they are all called upon to be thankful for being delivered from some storm, consequently they were all in this storm before they were redeemed, and they were thrown into it by the same cause, which made them lose themselves in the wilderness—fall into the pit—sicken and pine away for want of appetite. Sin was the fruitful parent of all these miseries. And the storm which sin raises in the soul, is a spiritual tempest of which the natural is a picture. The holy Spirit intended the one should be a natural representation of the other. He gave us the outward image that we might in it see the likeness of an inward storm. And he himself in his own word has applied the outward image to represent these inward objects, and therefore we have his own infallible application of the text; wherein he supposes us all to be embarked upon a voyage to the haven of eternal rest. And we sailed thither on a smooth unruffled sea, until sin entered into the world, and raised the winds, and made the waves beat against us, and a furious storm darkened the face of the sky, and hid the desired haven from our sight. And here the holy Spirit begins his description—"They who go down to the sea," into the ever moving, busy, agitated world, which sin has made like the troubled sea, "in ships," in worldly societies, opposed to the ark of the church, which is but one, "and do business in great waters," and are occupied in worldly business among the crowd, and in the bustle of worldly men. "These see the works of "the Lord, and his wonders in the deep,"—they see

a full display of his wonderful works in his manner of bringing these worldly people into distress: for he commandeth, all afflictions come by his order and appointment, this especially, which raiseth the stormy wind, which moveth the spirit of the world to oppose its own people, and lifteth up the waves thereof to distress them. Worldly men meet with a sea of troubles: for the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest: wave after wave beat against them, and swell and lift up themselves still higher and higher, until the raging billows break over their heads. And when these afflictions come, they are so distressed, their minds are tossed and agitated, that they can find no rest. Sometimes they mount up to heaven, carried up and swelled with spiritual pride, then again they go down to the depths, sunk with distrust and despair—their soul melteth away, has no stability or courage left, because of the trouble. The trouble is so great, that the light of reason is put out. The boasted moral sense refuses to take the helm, and the rectitude and dignity of human nature dare not direct. The religion of nature, and the fitness of things, aided with all the graces and ornaments of the arts and sciences, and set off with the lustre of classical learning, cannot hinder them from reeling to and fro, and staggering like a drunken man. Nay, with all these learned and polite accomplishments, they are at their wits end, quite unable to find out any expedient to extricate them from their distress.

This is a true picture of man in his natural state. It is drawn by the spirit of God, and is the likeness of every son of Adam; for sin has thrown them upon this boisterous sea, and raised this furious storm against them, and the spirit of the world and the devil keep it up in all its fury, and drive its mighty billows over their heads. And they can do nothing to escape perishing in the deep waters. Nothing but death is before them. Oh may the God of mercy open your eyes to see your danger, that finding no help upon earth, you may be disposed to look up to him, from whom alone

can your salvation come! and being thus disposed, then you will follow them in the text, "who cried unto the "Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of "their distresses."

This is the second part of the beautiful painting in the text. Happy was the affliction which made them seek help from God: for while the world smiled on them, they were apt to forget heaven. But when affliction pressed sore upon them, and no human relief offered, the most stupid and hardened sinners were then ready to ask relief from God, and to seek him in their distress, although they had forgotten and despised him in their prosperity. But no affliction works this happy effect more certainly, than the dangers of the sea, which are so great, and in a storm so far out of the reach of any succour, that there are very few, in such a case, who do not cry unto God for help. And hence comes the common saying—"that they, who know not how to pray, should go to sea to learn." A storm is an excellent teacher, it forces men to pray, it makes the most profane and irreligious look up to heaven, and if they once look up with the prayer of the heart, our God, out of his infinite love, immediately hears and answers. "Call upon me, says he, in the day of trouble, "so will I hear thee. And it shall come to pass, that "before they call I will answer, and while they are yet "speaking, I will hear." Thus prayer engages the almighty on their side, and then nothing is impossible to it. Prayer commands the elements—changes the seasons—stops the sun in its course—quenches the violence of fire—and calms the most tempestuous sea. You saw these poor mariners in distress, they had exerted all their skill, and toiled so long as their strength lasted, but to no purpose: the storm still raged, and grew more violent, so that all efforts being in vain they give up their vessel to the fury of the winds and waves, and then at last betake themselves to their prayers, and the prayer of faith did for them, what the united skill and strength of all the men in the world could never have

effected. It calmed the wind, it quieted the waves, it smoothed the sea, and carried the shattered vessel safe to the desired haven: for upon their crying to him, "he maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still, then are they glad, because they be quiet, "and so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." And this deliverance is to them a matter of great gladness. The past danger inhances the present safety—the storm which they have escaped now increases their enjoyment of the desired haven: for it is certain we relish prosperity better after adversity, peace after war, and health after sickness. A calm is never so pleasant as after a storm. And while we are tasting the pleasures of it, how can we avoid acknowledging our deliverance with gratitude.

This is the third part of the painting in the text. So soon as these mariners are delivered, they instantly offer up their sacrifice of thanksgiving—"O that men "would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and "declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of "men." The wonders, which he had wrought, deserved their best thanks, not only in private, but also in public, not only in the closet, but also in the great congregation. And the holy Spirit in the last words calls upon them to exalt their deliverer in the congregation of the people, and to praise him in the assembly of the elders, i. e. openly, in the face of the church, and if they should neglect this, I appeal unto you all, whether such ungrateful wretches did not deserve to have perished unregarded in the storm.

I have now considered the paraphrase upon the words, and have set before you the lively painting of our natural state, which they contain, and I come, secondly, to the spiritual use and application of them.

The image is this. Mankind before they are redeemed, are like a ship in a stormy sea, agitated with passions, tossed up and down with cares, and so blown about with various temptations, that they are never at rest. This is their calmest state in the smiling day of

smooth prosperity: but afflictions will come, the afflictions of sin, and Satan, and the world, will raise a violent storm, which all the wit and strength of man cannot escape. He will soon be swallowed up of the devouring waves; unless that same God who created the sea, speak to it, "peace, be still." We are all in the same situation the apostles were, when they were alone in the evening in the midst of the sea, and the wind and the waves were contrary; against which they toiled rowing in vain, until Christ came to them walking upon the sea, and commanded the winds to cease, and the waves to be still. Upon which there was a great calm: for they knew his voice who had spoken them into being, and they obeyed. His word is almighty to compose and still the raging war of the most furious elements. And he is as almighty in the spiritual world, as he is in the natural. Into whatever soul he enters, he commands all the jarring passions to be still, and there is indeed a blessed calm. O may the almighty Saviour speak thus unto you all, that you may sail on a smooth unruffled sea, until you arrive safe at the desired haven of eternal rest!

And now, my brethren, after what has been said in this and the preceding lectures of man's fallen state, let me ask, what opinion you entertain of it? Do you really think, that the image which the holy Spirit has set before you this day is true, and drawn from nature? Do you indeed believe, that sin has thrown you upon the wide and furious ocean, that the spirit of the world and the devil have raised a tempest against you, and that you are every moment in danger of being swallowed up by the merciless waves, and that there is no deliverer in heaven or earth, but the Lord Jesus? If you do not believe this truth, upon what principles do you deny it? Not upon scripture principles; for it is very common in scripture to describe the sinful state of man under this image. The book of Psalms is full of it. In the 18th, Christ, complaining of his enemies, says, "the floods of ungodly men made me afraid, but

"God took me, he drew me out of many waters, he "delivered me from my strong enemies"—here the many waters and the strong enemies stand for the same persons. The 69th Psalm begins thus—"save me, O God, for the waters are come in, even unto my soul, I "am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow "me;" and then in the 14th verse Christ prays for deliverance in these words, "let me be delivered from "them that hate me, and out of the deep waters"—the same ungodly men who hated him are also called deep waters. He prays again in the 144th Psalm, verse 7. "send thine hand from above, rid me and de-"liver me out of the great waters, and from the hand "of strange children." And these strange children are compared to troubled waters throughout the Prophets, and even to the end of the New Testament. St. James likens the inconstant wavering man to a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed, and St. Jude calls the ungodly infidels raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. And St. John, in the 17th chapter of the Revelation, has given us a key to open all these scriptures; he was shewn in a vision the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters—and in the 15th verse, the angel explains the vision, and says, "the waters which thou sawest, where "the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and "nations, and tongues," all the unconverted race of mankind of every nation and tongue.

These scriptures are plain and express, and the meaning of them cannot be mistaken. If you deny the evidence which they give, you must deny the plainest matter of fact in the world: for if you look upon the troubled face of the sea, and then look into the working of your own souls, you must observe the most striking likeness. The mind is as seldom serene and calm, as the face of the ocean is: various passions succeeding one another in perpetual fluctuation, forbid it to rest, they are always agitating and tossing it, opinions are continually changing, tempers ever fluctuating, as wave

follows wave, fashions are never at a stand, not only in dress, but also in learning, one system still pushing out another, ebbing and flowing, like the tide, and even the moral relations, and the moral fitness of things, notwithstanding their metaphysical eternity, are always fluctuating and changing, and yet always restless. And it cannot be otherwise, because the mind of fallen man is the very picture of the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, troubled like the sea, like it cannot rest, like it casting up the mire of corruption, and the dirt of sensuality, consequently there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. And is not this altogether the perfect likeness of the changeable inconstant world, whose tempers, passions, pursuits, and vices, are like the waves of the sea, succeeding one another in perpetual fluctuation and disorder?

Thus experience confirms the testimony of scripture, and by the mouth of these two witnesses the truth ought to be established. And what farther objection will you make to it? You will not say, that you do not find it to be a matter of fact by your own experience. Would to God none of you made this objection: for it does not prove that you are not in a storm, but only that you are seized with a sinful lethargy, and you doze and sleep on, while the vessel is sinking. O my brethren, this is the strongest delusion of sin, and for the love of God and your own souls, awake. You are indeed perishing, see, the waves are breaking in upon you, death is at hand, and will not your own safety induce you to shake of this lethargy? What a wonderful delusion is this? Satan and the world have been crying unto you, peace, peace, when there is no peace; they have lulled conscience asleep, and probably have seared it with an hot iron, and rendered it past feeling. In this case you will not feel your danger, although you are just sinking; the waves will soon swallow you up, and then you will find a storm, when the wrath of the almighty falls upon you, of which the

greatest fury of winds and waves can give but a very faint and imperfect image. God grant you may escape it! and may his grace awaken all your consciences, who sleep in sin! may the infinite love of the blessed Jesus open your eyes, and shew you your danger, that you may be led to cry unto him for deliverance! which is the

Second remark I have to make. And this relates to those persons among you, who find they are in a storm, and are willing to come to Christ, as these redeemed of the Lord did in the text, that he may command the winds and the waves, and there may be a calm. If you can but once see your danger, your are safe: for your distress cannot be greater than the Redeemer's mercy. Although you find yourselves sinking in the mighty waters, yet you have only to cry with Peter on the same occasion, Lord save me, and Jesus will certainly stretch forth his almighty arm, and you shall be saved. If you do but see your danger, and out of the deep sense of it cry unto him for help, he will not cast out your prayer! for he is a God of love, and his love is almighty to save. Be your sins ever so great, ever so numerous, your danger from them ever so imminent, fly but to the altar of his mercy, and take hold of the merits of that most precious blood, which was shed upon it, and then you are safe. For the blood of the lamb of God was shed for sinners, and no sinner ever sought aright to partake of the merits of it, and was cast out. I came not, says the blessed Jesus, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Sinners alone want a Saviour, and our God was therefore called Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins, and he has promised in the text, that so soon as they cry unto him out of the deep sense of their distress, he will hear and answer: for he is always more ready to save, than they are to cry unto him for salvation. And may these considerations hasten you to seek this help: into whatever distress sin may have thrown you, if it has exposed you to all

the storm and tempests of the world, yet here is an almighty deliverer. The winds and the waves know his voice, and when he commands, they obey. At his word the jarring elements are silent in the natural world, and they will be the same in the spiritual. If he speak peace unto your souls, there will be a calm indeed. The rage of conscience, agitated by the dark blasts of guilt, and by the horrible waves of misery, will presently subside, all the inconstant tempers, and ruffled passions will be composed, and a serenity, but little short of heaven, will ensue.

Such is the God of our salvation; whoever among you then sees your danger, and wishes for deliverance, come to our God and he will save you. Come to the Lord Jesus, with strong crying and tears, and you have his word for it, that you shall find in him an almighty deliverer. O ye poor distressed souls, whom conscience and guilt torment, here is your only remedy. Look up to your redeeming God: for his mercy is above your distresses. Your offences may be great against him, but they cannot be so great as you will find by faith his love is to you. He loved you even when you left him, how much more will he love you now you are returning? Remember what he suffered for you: for your sins he sweat drops of blood—for your sins he endured the torments of his bitter passion—for your sins he bled on the cross—and for your sins he died—his love to you was stronger than death: and therefore be not discouraged at the sight of your own wickedness. He will receive you, be ye ever so sinful: he will not shut you out, if ye have been ever so ungrateful. Only come to him this day, and let there be raised in your hearts a strong cry for his salvation. Now try the truth of what you have heard. Seek him with your most fervent desires and earnest prayers, and see whether he be not the almighty Saviour of sinners. And if you come believing, as these redeemed of the Lord did in the text, who, when they saw no way left to escape, at last looked up to him,

then he will as certainly save you, as he did them. O may his blessed Spirit put it into all your hearts to seek his love, until he bring you to the haven, where you would be, first to the holy haven of the church militant, and then to the happy haven of the church triumphant! And

After you have received his mighty deliverance, after he has brought you safe from the storms of the world, and has calmed the winds, and composed the waves, which opposed your voyage to the desired haven, has made you a just and holy member of the ark of his church, and has placed you securely in it; after he has done these wonders for you, is it possible for you to be silent in your deliverer's praise? While you have a grateful sense of his benefits fresh in mind, you will certainly be celebrating them. You cannot refrain from the just tribute of thanks. And this is the third and last part of the beautiful painting in the text, "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his "goodness, and for his wonderful works to the chil-"dren of men." And they who have been in danger, and they who have been delivered, and now live in safety and joy, they must be telling of his salvation all the day long. Their hearts overflow with gratitude and praise. Redemption is their favourite subject, and the very name of their Redeemer is dear and precious. JESUS is a word that sounds exceeding sweet and pleasant in their ears: they find continual delight in speaking of their redeeming God, and in declaring the wonders which he hath done for their redemption. And they praise him with the gratitude of the heart, and with the thankfulness of all the affections, not only in private, but also in public, not only with their lips, but with their lives; for the praises of a pure and holy life are the best sacrifices of thanksgiving which we can now offer. And may our almighty God and Saviour grant, that every one of you may thus praise him! O blessed Jesus! let this scripture be fulfilled to day in this whole congregation. Let not

one of them depart until they see upon what a stormy ocean they are all embarked, and what dreadful winds and waves sin, and Satan, and the world, have raised against them. Shew them their danger, that they may fly unto thee for help. And the moment they cry unto thee, be at hand, O God of love, to hear and answer. And bring them safe by thy good Spirit from the storms and tempests of this world unto the desired haven. Blessed Jesus say unto our troubled souls, peace, be still. Let thy grace calm all our passions, and so smooth all our ruffled tempers, that every one of us may go out of the church in perfect love with thee, and with one another. Hear us, most adorable Saviour, and answer us to the glory of the Father, and to the honour of the eternal Spirit, three persons of one undivided essence whom we worship and adore now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VII.

PSALM CVII. 33—39.

He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground: a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein: he turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs, and there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation: and sow the fields and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase: he blesseth them also so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

In the former parts of this divine hymn we have seen the misery and distress of mankind in their fallen state, from which, so soon as they were made thoroughly sensible of it, and humbled under it, our gracious Redeemer delivered them. He came upon their first cry, and his almighty arm brought salvation. And his love was equal to his power: for he not only saved them from their misery and distress, which was indeed a most adorable act of free and unmerited grace, but he also enriched them with his divine and heavenly blessings, which, since they could never merit, they could therefore have no reason ever to expect. But mercy is the distinguishing attribute of our Lord Jesus. He is free to pardon—free to give. Whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out, neither out of his love here, nor his glory hereafter. And shall not they, who have tasted of his redeeming love, comply with the prophet's request in this psalm? Shall not they be thankful? Consider from what a depth of misery his free grace has raised them, and then judge how it is possible for them to refuse their due tribute of thankfulness? You saw them first in the wilderness, lost and starving tra-

vellers, ready to perish; you beheld them falling into the pit, where the enemy found them, and put them in chains of misery and iron; and how greatly were you moved at the sight of their sickness, when they lay pining away through a total loss of appetite, and were grown so weak and feeble, that death was ready to take them into the prison of the grave, and to shut its gates upon them: and what was the worst of all, the soul was never at rest; sin, which brought them into these miseries, made them still more miserable under them. Guilt would not suffer any of the faculties to be composed, and conscience never knew what it was to be in a calm. Indeed the whole man, body and soul, were in such a continual ferment, and so distressed for fear of perishing every moment, that nothing in nature could so perfectly represent their situation, as the distress of mariners at sea in a violent storm. These are the dark scenes, in which the unconverted and unregenerate lay: you have beheld the shady part of their picture, now you are to look upon a more agreeable and pleasing prospect. Under the image which we are to view at present, the holy Spirit has given us a beautiful painting of their deliverance, and we see the same persons, who lay in the most exquisite distress, here placed in the most delightful and happy circumstances. They are brought out of the wilderness, and out of the pit, and are healed of all their infirmities, and their consciences are composed and calmed—they are pardoned freely—made just and holy—admitted into the one true church of Christ—and blessed in it by him with all true spiritual graces. O what an entire and happy change is this! God grant, that every unconverted person here present may experience it! may he turn the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs, &c. May the love of our almighty deliverer exert his power this day, and fulfil every word of what is here said of the Gentile church in this whole congregation, while I am

First, Laying before you a comment upon the words, and

Secondly, Bringing the doctrine contained in them home to your hearts, by way of spiritual application.

The holy Spirit begins with a description of the rejecting of the Jewish church, and of the transferring of its privileges and graces to the Gentiles. "He turneth "rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into "dry ground." This passage is here applied in a spiritual sense. It relates to redemption. And nothing more is necessary to the understanding of it, than to remember, that water is in scripture, the known and established emblem of the holy Spirit. What the one does in nature, the other does in grace. St. John puts the matter beyond all doubt, in his comment upon Christ's words, who had been speaking of the waters which should flow from believers, but this, says he, he spake of the Spirit. And the other scriptures speak of the Spirit under the same image. A church enriched with the graces of heaven is compared by the Prophets to a well-watered garden, (Isaiah lviii. 11. Jer. xxxi. 12.) to the paradise of God, watered with its four fruitful rivers: for as every thing useful and ornamental in the vegetable world is raised up by water, so is every thing in the spiritual world raised up by the holy Spirit. And in the Jewish church he had caused every virtue abundantly to grow; it was nourished with the streams of his divine grace; enriched with the dew of heaven, and blessed with rivers of comfort, insomuch that it wanted no manner of thing that is good. St. Paul thus enumerates the blessings of the Israelites—"to whom "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the cove-"nants, and the giving of the law, and the service of "God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of "whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." Rom. ix. 4. And when he came, this once favourite church would not receive him for the promised Messiah, but rejected and murdered him. For which crime the greatest part of the Jewish nation was cut off, and the

rest according to their own prophecies were dispersed over the face of the earth, and they will continue dispersed, until they receive Jesus of Nazareth for their Saviour and their God. While they justify the horrid rebellion of their forefathers, who crucified the Lord of life, the veil must remain upon their hearts; and it is remarkably upon them at present: for they are the most stupidly infatuated of all people—living without either civil or ecclesiastical polity—without a temple—without a priest—without sacrifices—without an atonement——and indeed they are now without a God; because they have rejected the true God, the blessed Trinity of their fathers, and worship they know not what; they have set up some strange kind of an infinitely extended metaphysical being, whom they call the one supreme God, and who never had any existence but what the enemies of Christianity have been pleased to give him. Thus they have turned the once fruitful church into a wilderness. And the holy Spirit here describes them in this situation. The church of God, which he had blessed with his promises, and with his prophets, and had enriched with the continual streams of his grace, was now made barren. When it rejected that God and Saviour, on whom its whole œconomy was founded, then he took away all its privileges and blessings, and it has been ever since a poor, dead, barren wilderness. Deprived of his grace, it was reduced to the same state, which the most fruitful country would soon be in, if it should be deprived of the rain and dew of heaven: for then nothing could grow. It would become a barren desert. Apply this to the present state of the Jews, and you see how God turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground —and as it follows in the 34th verse, "he turneth a "fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." This scripture is now fulfilled literally, as well as spiritually. The holy land has been as remarkable for its fruitfulnes, as it is now for its barrenness: for it was once the most fruitful

country in the world. The sacred writers mention the particular blessings with which it was enriched. Moses speaks of it in these words: "The country which thou "goest to possess is a land which the Lord thy God "careth for, the eyes of the Lord thy God are always "upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto "the end of the year; and therefore it is a good land, "a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths "that spring out of vallies and hills, a land of wheat "and barley, and vines and fig-trees, and pomegran-"ates, a land of olive oil, and honey, a land wherein "thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt "not lack any thing in it." And it fully answered this description. It was once dressed, and cultivated, and flourished like a fruitful vineyard; but at present it lays desolate and waste. The vineyard of the Lord of hosts was the house of Israel, and because after all his cultivation they brought forth no fruit, therefore he declares, "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it "shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and "it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste, it "shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come "up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds "that they rain no more upon it." (Isaiah v. 5, 6.) This prophecy is now fulfilled. Judea is one entire wilderness, over-run with briers and thorns, as historians relate, and modern travellers testify. And the fruitful land was turned into barrenness for the wickedness of them who dwelt therein. Wickedness was the cause of its desolation. The prophets had foretold them of their utter extirpation from the promised land, if they should reject the Messiah when he came. And he came to his own, but his own received him not; they opposed, blasphemed, and crucified him, and therefore according to his own predictions they were cut off, and dispersed over the face of the earth, and the fruitfulness of their country was taken from it, and given to the Gentiles, as it follows in the 35th verse, "he turneth "the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground

"into water-springs." The heathen nations gladly received Jesus for their Saviour and their God, and therefore their wilderness was turned into a standing water, and their dry ground into water-springs; and this happened, when the Spirit was poured upon them from on high: for then the wilderness became a fruitful field, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed like the rose, it blossomed abundantly, and rejoiced even with joy and singing. And he enriched the heathens thus abundantly with the streams of divine grace, after he had made them thirsty, and had disposed them to receive the water of life with thankfulness; "for when "the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and "their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear "them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them, I "will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods "upon the dry ground—I will pour my Spirit upon "thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and "they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows "by the water courses." The prophet Isaiah is full of these images; he frequently compares the heathens, before they received the gospel, to a desolate wilderness, but after they embraced it, to a cultivated garden, enriched with beautiful flowers, and useful fruits, covered at first with the most fragrant blossoms, and afterwards abounding with the richest products, and it received all its fruitfulness from the rain and dew of heaven. The grace of the holy Spirit was the cause of their flourishing and bringing forth fruit under the gospel. His gracious operation is as necessary in the spiritual world, as the genial influences of warm showers are in the natural. He does the same in grace, which they do in vegetation.

The scripture teaches us to take our ideas of his operation from this image, and it is very familiar and well understood. You all know what are the effects of soft gentle rain: you have seen it cover the earth in a short time with a most agreeable verdure, after it had been parched and burnt up with a long drought. You

have seen what plentiful harvests followed a mild dropping season, so that it might be said without a figure "the clouds drop fatness." And you may see the influence of the holy Spirit equally fruitful in his province. Look into the early ages of the Christian church, and you will see how he blessed and enriched the first converts from heathenism; they put forth every blossom that is fair and fragrant, and were fruitful also in every good word and work: they had been like barren trees in a wilderness, without leaves, or blossom, or fruit, but so soon as they were transplanted into the church, they began to flourish abundantly, and watered with the continual streams of divine grace they brought forth fruit unto eternal life. And thus the wilderness was turned into a standing water, and the dry ground into water-springs; verse 36. "and there he maketh "the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city "for habitation." And in this fruitful soil he placeth the hungry. They wander no more as they did in the wilderness, they are no more lost and ready to perish; but they here find an abiding city, and are securely settled within the pale of the church. "And they sow "their lands," verse 37. Our blessed Lord has explained these words. The seed he says is the word—sowing the seed in the lands is sowing the word in the hearts of the hearers. And this was the office of the apostles, and of the succeeding ministers of the gospel. Indeed the apostles were most eminent and blessed in this great work: for they carried the good seed into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world. They converted whole provinces and kingdoms to the faith, and they went on sowing the word without ceasing, until they had planted it in every wilderness upon the face of the earth, and had there watered it with the dew of heaven. O that our Almighty Lord would raise up in this our day an army of apostolical ministers, who, like their predecessors, have the good seed sown abundantly in their own hearts, and are therefore best able to sow it in the hearts of others! and by the

success of such men in sowing their lands may many "vineyards be planted." A vineyard is in scripture the established emblem of the church, where the true vine grows and flourishes. The psalmist and the wise king apply it in this sense, and the prophet Isaiah puts it beyond doubt in the 5th chapter, where, explaining the parable of the vineyard, he says, "the "vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." And our blessed Saviour makes this application of the same parable; indeed the Jews themselves make it: for when he asked them what he should do to those husbandmen, who had injured some, and slain others of the servants of the Lord of the vineyard, and at last murdered his own son, they reply, "He will miserably "destroy these wicked men, and will let out his vine-"yard unto other husbandmen." Accordingly he let it out to us. When he destroyed the wicked men of the Jewish church, he then let out his vineyard to us Gentiles. The apostles came and planted churches among us, and the almighty arm of our God has thus far protected them. O may his grace and favour continue, that we, "may bring forth fruits of increase," as the churches first brought out of the wilderness did. They brought forth all the fair blossoms of an holy life; and they were not like some early buds, which are apt to be cut off by cold winds and sharp frosts, but they had grace to withstand the severest storms of temptation, and both to set and to ripen their fruit—fruit of increase—growing still in grace—increasing from one degree to another—and persevering, until they reaped the crown of eternal glory. And thus the last part of the beautiful image in the text was completed—He blessed them so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not the cattle to decrease. By the particular blessing of the almighty God and Saviour they multiplied greatly, the Lord adding to the church daily such as should be saved. His grace went out along with the first preachers of the gospel, as he still does with all his faithful ministers, and he gave them a

fortitude, which no danger could intimidate, and a power of utterance, which the adversary could not withstand. Insomuch, that when the poor fishermen had been toiling all the night, and had taken nothing, yet when the Lord gave the word, and accompanied it with his blessing, they inclosed a great number of fishes, even enough to fill both the ships, both the ark of the Jewish, and the ark of the Gentile church. Then was his promise fulfilled, "I will make you fishers of men:" for they caught thousands at once. The first time they let down the net, they took three thousand, and the second time five thousand. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. And though this be a day of small things; yet the Lord's hand is not shortened. He can still bless us, and make us multiply exceedingly. We see some happy instances of it—sufficient to convince us, that if we had more apostolical ministers, who had a single eye to the glory of their adorable master, and were inflamed with a fervent love to the souls of men, he would still bless our labours abundantly. O almighty Jesus, we are here waiting for thy blessing, now bless us; and since thou hast promised, that the very cattle of thy household the church should not decrease, enable us Lord so to increase, that every part of this scripture may be fulfilled to day in this whole congregation. And may his divine grace influence all your hearts, while I am endeavouring to speak unto them under the

Second general head, Which was to apply what has been said.

The words contain a new argument for thankfulness, taken from the loving kindness of our most gracious Redeemer, who found us in the dry barren deserts of heathenism, blind in ignorance, sunk in vice, and yet wretched as we were, his mercy was moved at the sight of our misery, and his grace flew to our relief. When the Jewish church rejected him, and persecuted his apostles and followers, then he sent the Romans to destroy it. Upon which we were taken into his love and

favour—we poor heathens, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death—we were admitted into his church—watered with his grace—enriched with his blessings—and protected by his almighty arm unto this very day. And ought we not to be thankful for such inestimable and eternal mercies? Should we not speak forth the praises of this most loving Redeemer, and endeavour to inspire all the world with gratitude to him? Certainly this is a duty most right and equitable, and therefore I will make some short remarks upon the distinct parts of it in the order they are placed in the text. And

First, The holy Spirit here teaches us what a situation we were in before God turned away the streams of his grace from the Jewish church, and directed them to us. We were in a barren wilderness—barren of every thing spiritual and divine. Although the heathens flourished in arts and sciences, were polite and classical, although they could form the accomplished gentleman, and finish the character of the good moral man, although they had excellent systems of ethics, and knew all the moral and civil virtues, yet if the word of God be true, they were in a wilderness. The most refined classical scholars with all their knowledge were in a vast desert; for they knew not Jesus Christ. And without him the most polished genius is no nearer salvation, than the most barbarous savage; because without him they neither know the way to heaven, nor if known can they take one step in it. There was a total ignorance among them concerning the divine nature, and concerning the atonement for sin. And our ancestors in this island were sunk as low in ignorance and vice as any of the heathens. They were in a wilderness, where no saving truth grew; but superstition and idolatry flourished. That we are not still in this situation, is entirely owing to the free mercy of our blessed Redeemer, who sent the streams of his grace into our barren hearts. This is the

Second point remarkable in the text. The Psalmist

says, he sent waters into the wilderness to change its nature, i. e. he sent his grace into our hearts to change their nature, to shew them their dead and barren state, to make them sensible of it, distressed under it, and then cry to him for deliverance. And when grace has thus far disposed the heart aright, and it can pray for more grace, then will our Lord enrich it with abundant streams: for he is always disposed to give in the measure we are disposed to receive; and if we hunger and thirst for much, he has promised that we shall be filled. There is no doctrine of Christianity more opposed than this, nor any at present more ridiculed. And until men desire to have their barren hearts changed, it must sound strange to them, to talk of the necessity of doing, what they have no desire to do. They have found nothing of this barrenness in their own souls, they do not believe what we say of it, and therefore it appears to them like talking of a sixth sense. But the more insensible they are, the greater is their danger. And if there be any of you in this state, thus dozing and sleeping away your lives in carnal security, be assured that you are yet in the wilderness, and the less you see it, the more barren you are. If you see not your hearts covered with sin and desolation, Oh! what blindness, what infatuation has seized you! for until you see your natural barrenness, you will find no want of grace to amend and enrich the soil, and without grace nothing can grow. It is equally necessary towards changing and reforming the soul, as water is to change and reform the desolate wilderness. And as in its hot dry sand no vegetable can grow without moisture, so in your barren hearts no good thing can grow without the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: "for without "me, says he, ye can do nothing." And therefore, my brethren, if you refuse to believe this doctrine, you must act against the evidence of your senses. And it will greatly increase your condemnation, that the scriptures have set in so clear a light the necessity of grace, and yet you would not be convinced, but would still

obstinately live and perish in your barren state, unfruitful and dead to every good word and work. May God shew you, since argument cannot, your sinfulness and guilt. O that his blessed Spirit would now let you see your own hearts, that there may be raised in them a strong crying for grace. And if he does bring you to desire it, the love of our blessed God, who has it to give, cannot withold it: he will bless and enrich you to such a degree, that you shall bring forth fruits of increase. This is the

Third doctrinal point in the text. The streams of divine grace were therefore sent into the wilderness, that its nature might be changed, and might bring forth fruits of increase. And into whatever heart grace enters, it makes an entire change and reformation. A wilderness improved into a regular and beautiful garden is not so great a change: for grace makes the man a new creature. The dead faculties of his soul revive—the barren grow and shoot forth—the understanding bears the fairest blossoms, and the will and affections ripen and perfect the sweetest fruit. Under the genial influence of grace the whole man is like a tree planted by the water side, always green and flourishing, that will bring forth its fruit in due season. And whatever fruit is brought to maturity, by the mild and gentle operation of this divine agent, will be acceptable to God the Father. Good works put forth and perfected by grace, are well pleasing to him. When grace has changed our barren hearts and reformed them, by justifying us through the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, then are we enabled to proceed in the work of sanctification; but not before: because an unjust person cannot bring forth justifying fruit, no more than a corrupt tree can bring forth good fruit. Our persons must be just and right before our works can be, and the scripture is positive, that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Good works belong to a new creation, and before we can do them we must be created anew—we must become new creatures

in Christ Jesus, and be grafted into him by the living principle of grace, and draw our nourishment from him as much as a branch does from its stock, before we can bear the fruit of any one good work. This is scripture. This is the doctrine of our church. And whatever some proud self-righteous Pharisees may fancy, this is the doctrine of philosophy and nature. We have sensible demonstration of it. Take a branch off from the stock on which it grew, and let it lie in the open air, what will it produce? You see it withers and dies. If any man be cut off from Christ, the stock upon which we must all grow, or perish for ever, what will he produce? Hear our Lord's judgment. "As "the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide "in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth "in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much "fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." This is the determination of our infallible God, and if you refuse to submit to it, after it has been confirmed by our church, and indeed by the whole Christian church, and by matter of fact, and sensible demonstration, if all this evidence cannot convince you, what will you object to the experience of all living Christians, who declare with one voice—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto "us, but unto thy free grace be all the praise." This is the language of every true believer, who confesses, that he cannot so much as think a good thought without the influence of the holy Spirit: for it is he who worketh in us both to will and to do. If this still cannot convince you, may that grace which you oppose work upon your hearts, and convince you effectually; may the giver of all grace shew you your barrenness without it, and dispose you to seek, until you find a thorough change and reformation; and then you will join your grateful hearts with ours, in returning praise and thanks to our God, who has so blessed us with his grace, as to enable us to bring forth fruits of increase:

And this is the fourth and last remark, which belongs to believers, who know by happy experience the truth of the scripture, which we have been considering: for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ has brought them out of the wilderness, changed their barrenness by his grace, planted them in his church, watered them with the dew of heaven, and enriched them with all the sweet fruits of an holy life. In you, my Christian brethren, this scripture is fulfilled. And therefore you cannot but be thankful. To our dearest Redeemer you offer up your praises with joy and delight. When you consider what wonders Jesus hath done for your salvation, you cannot be silent in his praise; but big with a lively sense of the numerous and eternal blessings of his free grace, you speak of him with the highest strains of gratitude, and yet you find you cannot put forth all his praise. You are unable to declare in words, what your hearts feel, and therefore you let your lives speak forth his praise, as well as your lips. O may his blessed Spirit keep you always in this thankful temper! and may our gracious and most adorable Jesus increase daily the number of the thankful! may his grace change and reform the wilderness of sinners' hearts, that the good seed of the word may be sown in them, and they may grow and flourish in the vineyard of the Lord's church, there bringing forth abundantly the fruits of increase! O almighty Saviour, if there be any in this congregation still in the wilderness, now bring them out of it; now water their hearts with the plentiful streams of thy grace, and grant, most loving God, that some—O if it be but one soul, may be added this day to thy little flock, that finding thy blessing and thy power present among us, we may go on multiplying exceedingly, until the earth be full of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the waters cover the sea: and may all redound to the glory of God the Father, and to the honour of the eternal Spirit, the Trinity in unity, whom we worship and adore now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

PSALM CVII. 39, 40, 41.

Again they are minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families, like a flock.

We left the redeemed of the Lord in the most flourishing situation. After they had been brought out of the wilderness, and delivered from the pit, and healed of their infirmities, and saved from the storms of vice, they were placed under the tender care of their most loving Redeemer. And upon the rejection of the Jewish church, he sent into the wilderness the abundant streams of his grace, and there he planted the Gentile church, watering it with his good Spirit, and cherishing it with the genial warmth of the light of life: by whose influence it grew and spread, and was so enriched and blessed, that it multiplied exceedingly, and became like a well cultivated and fertile country, where they sow their lands and plant vineyards, which yield them fruits of increase, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold. And this experience of their Redeemer's love is certainly sufficient to make every one of them thankful, and to excite in their hearts the warmest sentiments of praise and gratitude.

In the words which I have read we have a new motive for thankfulness, taken from the decline and decay of the Christian church. Its fruitfulness is now turned into barrenness. The same country which you saw before adorned with the sweetest blossoms, bringing forth the richest fruits, and covered all over with plenty, is now degenerated again into a wilderness. Nothing

grows in it but thorns and thistles, the fruits of the curse. This is a melancholy change of the church, and it should move us greatly to see it fall back again into the same desolate and wretched state, from which it had been raised. But it has been the invariable rule of the Redeemer's providence. He waters the church with his grace, and blesses it with the light of his fruitful rays so long as men will receive their kind influence. But when they reject them, either by refusing to make any use of them, or by perverting them to a wrong use, then he withholds his blessings. He withdraws his grace and the light of his countenance, upon which, the same darkness and deadness ensue in the church, as would be in the world, if the sun were to withdraw his comfortable light and heat, and to arise no more with his reviving beams upon the earth. Thus he turned the fruitful land of the Jewish church into a wilderness for the wickedness of them who dwelled therein. And he transferred their fruitfulness to the wilderness of the Gentiles. And again he turns our fruitful country into a wilderness for the wickedness of them, who dwell in it. He began to fulfil this scripture by removing the grace and light of the gospel from the seven churches in Asia, and he has left us in his treatment of them a terrible example of his just vengeance upon every wicked infidel church. And he has since taken vengeance upon several other churches. When they refused to walk by the light of his gospel, he then removed the candlestick from them: and deprived of his light, they could produce nothing but the works of darkness, and would certainly be sentenced to that outward darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever. Our church has long refused to walk by the light of the gospel; God grant our candlestick may not be entirely removed! we do indeed deserve it. Our crying national sins, and our open insolent infidelity call aloud for judgment. O! what mercy must dwell in his breast, who hears daily multitudes of traitors plotting the destruction of his divinity, and yet

after repeated acts of treason, for any one of which against the king's person they would have been justly put to death, nevertheless spares them and withholds the deserved punishment? But although he be a God of mercy yet his Spirit may be grieved, and his long-suffering may be wearied out. Remember how he destroyed the seven churches, and behold in what a wilderness they now lay, and we shall perish after their example, unless we repent. And I hope the consideration of the scripture now before us, may, by his blessing, be the means of persuading those among you, who are his enemies, now to sue to him for pardon, and to confirm those who have placed their whole trust and confidence in his merits. As to the former, their dreadful situation is described in these words, "again they are "diminished and brought low, through oppression, af-"fliction, and sorrow," &c. And as to the latter, they have a sweet promise of his loving protection, even in the greatest corruption of the church. "Yet setteth he "the poor humble Christian on high from affliction, "and maketh him families like a flock." While the rest of the world sits in darkness and in the shadow of death, the people of God have light in all their dwellings. While others are visited with his plagues and judgments, he sets his own people on high, out of the reach of affliction, and in the worst of times he watches over them with the care of the most tender shepherd, and makes them families like a flock. And these are the persons here called upon to be thankful, and if they, after such mercies, should be silent, the very stones would cry out, and call them ungrateful.

Let us then meditate upon these interesting words,

First, By considering their sense and meaning, and

Secondly, By applying the doctrine contained in them to our spiritual use and improvement.

And may the blessed Spirit go along with us, and enable us to reap all the profit from this scripture, which he intended for the faithful by recording it! let

us then enquire into his guidance by what means the church, which we saw before flourishing and fruitful, should now become a desolate wilderness: for the same people, who had been in the wilderness, and were brought out of it, and placed in the fruitful garden of the church, are again diminished and brought as low as they were at first. They decrease in number, and are depressed in condition. They who multiplied exceedingly, are again diminished, and they, who were high in every respect, are brought low. The faithful are diminished from among the children of men. Oh dreadful change! to be turned from fruitfulness into barrenness——from a flourishing church into a desolate wilderness—from being cherished with the comfortable rays of divine light, and watered with the fertile dew of heaven, now to be deprived of both, are the greatest calamities which can befal a people in this world. To be thus driven into the wilderness again, is worse than to have been in it at first: because after God had visited them with the grace of his gospel, and has now withdrawn himself in displeasure, there is no reason to think, that he will return in mercy to a people, who have abused his grace and insulted his gospel: after he has long waited to reclaim them, and they still reject the offers of his pardoning love, and stand out against all his intreaties, obstinately rebellious, then it will be but just and equitable, if he suffer them to be again diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow. These three are the causes of the decay of the Christian church, and they contain a short history of that mystery of iniquity, which now worketh in the children of disobedience. The first cause is the oppressor, the second is the evil of sin into which he brings them, the third is the evil of sorrow and misery. And it is impossible that any church or society should flourish, which is under the vile bondage of the cruel oppressor, and sin and misery. Under these tyrants it must be diminished and brought low.

The first we render oppression, but as there must be

an agent to perform the action, I therefore chose to give him his term of office, and to call him the oppressor. Such an one was Pharaoh, who oppressed the children of God, and by his hard bondage tried to diminish them and to bring them low: and he holds forth to us, in his manner of treating the Israelites, a lively portraiture of a more cruel oppressor, who is a declared enemy to all the people of God, and who has been trying to murder them from the beginning. The oppression of this great adversary was represented in Pharaoh's bondage: for it was by his instigation that Pharaoh was such a tyrant over the bodies of the Israelites, as he is over the souls of all his deluded followers. So that the oppressor is a just and expressive title of the great tyrant the devil. Is not he the oppressor of God's people, who brought us all into slavery by the original transgression, and who leaves no temptation untried to keep us his slaves? Although he deals in nothing but lies and murder, yet he keeps the multitude under his infernal bondage, and oppresses them with the most heavy yoke of sin and misery. And when they begin to be uneasy, and to be galled with the yoke, he tempts and deceives them on with lies, using all his cunning wiles, and lays every bewitching snare for their destruction. And although they are assured, that he has no wages to give them, but death temporal and eternal, yet he deludes and leads them on, until he gets them fast bound with the chains of sin and misery. And is he not an oppressor? Is not such a lawless tyrant, who has an absolute dominion over sinners, and who executes it with hellish malice, is not he the great oppressor? And so far as his tyranny reaches, the church must be diminished and brought low. He keeps it under by means of evil, which is the second cause of its decline. We render the word affliction, but it signifies evil, and properly the evil of sin; the evils of affliction and misery which follow sin are expressed in the third cause of the church's decay. The great oppressor overthrows the

"there is no way." He, who should teach others the right way, wanders from it, and even the princes are turned into the wilderness, where the gospel at first found them. And when the shepherds are thus lost and bewildered, what must become of their poor flocks? can the teachers shew the sheep how to keep out of that wilderness, into which they themselves are fallen? How should it be that the blind should lead the blind, and yet neither of them should go astray? Doubtless the sheep must be unhappy, which have a blind shepherd over them: for the wolf may prey upon them unmolested, whenever he pleases, and may devour and disperse the whole flock.

This is a faithful account of the general decay of the Christian church. Sad experience proves the truth of it. The once flourishing church is now turned into a wilderness. We see it. The whole face of Christendom, compared to its former fruitfulness, is now a desert. The light of the gospel is almost extinguished for the wickedness of those men, who take upon them the name of Christianity, but deny the power of it; for the European churches, Protestant, and Roman, are already diminished and brought low by the great oppressor, and by sin, and by misery—they are so low, that the princes have lost the respect due to their high offices, and are become contemptible, and are now got into that very wilderness, from whence the gospel delivered them. In these times of general corruption, the Redeemer might in justice take away our candlestick, as he hath done from other churches. But here is the subject of praise and thanksgiving, that he still continues the light of the gospel to us. He is infinitely merciful to them, who trust to him, and be they ever so few, ever so poor and mean, yet he has given them a most sweet and comfortable promise, that when he comes to visit a wicked infidel church, he will watch over them with the care of the most tender shepherd, and they shall lack nothing—Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction—the poor—the poor in spirit—

the humble Christian he setteth on high. He will exalt them of low degree, according to his invariable rule, he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. "And he will make them families like a flock"—no flock can be more safe within the fold, than they shall be—regarded by his infinite love, watched over by his all-seeing eye, and defended by his almighty arm, they shall be set on high out of the reach of danger. Though they be few, yet they are as dear to their God as the apple of his eye. Though the world despise them, yet the Lord Jesus loves them. Though they be the scorn and ridicule of an infidel age, yet he esteems them more than his own life, for he shed his blood upon the cross to save them. Though they be the off-scouring of the earth, yet they are the riches of heaven. And when their Lord comes again in all his glory, he will take them into his family, and will admit them into the eternal joys of his heavenly kingdom. How happy then must these Christians be, who are thus blessed in those worst times of the church? And O how thankful should they be, that they were not carried away with the torrent of vice and infidelity! The more wicked the age is, the more are they indebted to the grace of their God, which kept them from the prevailing corruption. And seeing nothing but open profaneness around them, how can they refrain from the praises of their dearest Lord, who preserved them from it? Certainly they cannot avoid giving him thanks for this great blessing, while their hearts feel it; and they will do all that lays in their power to make others partake of the same blessing, that they may join with us in the same thanks; O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for the wonders that he hath done for the redemption of men.

This is I think the sense and meaning of the text. And it is a very awakening scripture, and ought to rouse up your particular attention: for it offers to your consideration a most interesting truth, viz. that the

Christian church would decline from its flourishing fruitful state, and degenerate again into the wilderness, from whence the Redeemer had taken it. And has this scripture been fulfilled? Has the Christian church been, or is it at present in a wilderness? Let us consider these points under the second general head, and endeavour to improve them to our spiritual use and benefit. And first, the flourishing church was to be diminished and brought low by the cruel oppressor, and by sin, and by misery. And God knows, it is diminished and brought low indeed, so very low, that it is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed. And I hope his goodness in sparing us may be the means of converting some, and confirming others; if we take a short view of our present unhappy state, with respect to immorality and infidelity, and consider how little we deserved to be spared.

As to morals, our people are entirely corrupt. They are beyond the example of former ages, dissolute and dishonest, insomuch that his majesty has more than once recommended it to the parliament to try to put a stop to the spreading of immorality. But nothing has been done. Nay the want of morals is so evident and glaring, that even the teachers of dry morality begin to find it, and have lately complained in public, that after all their moral preaching for near an hundred years, the people are not in the least more moral. And is it not time then to have done with mere morality, since we have had so much preaching of it, that now we have no morality left? This moral preaching has made our people so immoral, that they are got to a pitch of wickedness beyond what the very heathens ever attained: for to boast of having no virtue or honesty, to make it a matter of merit to be able to act upon no principle, and to be guided by nothing but interest, these are the peculiar characteristics of the present age. And when men thus avow open and barefaced corruption, and, throwing off the very mask of honesty, dare appear publicly the rotten advocates for vice, then cer-

tainly the church can never be diminished and brought lower, as to morals. And it might reasonably be expected, that the common people would be thus immoral, since the great have set them the example, and have entirely cast off Christianity. Men of rank and politeness are become too refined and delicate in their notions to believe in Jesus Christ. And they have taken away all necessity of believing in him by utterly exploding his divinity: and yet they keep up the name of Christianity, which is the most stupid and idolatrous religion that ever was invented, if the author of it be not the true God. It rests entirely upon the divinity of Christ; this is its foundation. Nothing can stand without it. But where shall we find great and learned men, who believe that Jesus Christ is self-existent, and equal with the Father in every perfection and attribute? Publicly from the press, privately in conversation, you hear this fundamental doctrine of Christianity ridiculed and insulted; and the disbelief has spread, and poisoned all orders and degrees of men, insomuch that we have societies erected upon the principle of blasphemy, with liberty of free debate, as they call it, i. e. with liberty to blaspheme the Godhead of Jesus Christ. And what is the most melancholy point of all, the church and state look on unconcerned, while that God, whose servants they are, is treated with more insolent blasphemy in this city, than the very Jews offered to him at his crucifixion. And are these things really so? Do immorality and infidelity flourish thus abundantly among us? If they do, immorality will soon pull down our church, and infidelity will dig up the very foundations of it, and then certainly it will be diminished and brought low. God grant it may not fall lower than it is, but that the few names which are left in it may be kept from falling, and others may daily be added to them. And this we pray for the more earnestly, that Christ may not pour contempt upon princes, which is the second remark.

The church must be fallen very low, when its princes are become contemptible: for they were raised to great dignity, that they might stop the torrent of profaneness and unbelief. Their honours and revenues were to give them weight and influence in the support of their master's cause, and when it was sinking and like to fall into disgrace, it was certainly their interest then to maintain it with all their might, because if it fell, their disgrace would not be long after it. But they sat still and quiet, enjoying themselves, warm and snug in their opulent stations, while their master was wounded with immorality, and crucified afresh by unbelief. Although they eat of his bread, yet they saw him robbed of his divine glory, and neither used their tongues nor their pens in his defence, therefore justly did he pour contempt upon such princes. He made them base and mean in the eyes of the people. He took away the respect due to their high offices, and because they refused to defend his divine honour, though they were well paid for it, he therefore made them dishonourable: for them that despise me, says our God, whatever their station be, shall be lighty esteemed. And has not this happened? Look around Christendom, and see in what church the princes of it are respectable. The bishop of Rome—how low is he sunk! and his brethren are falling fast into disgrace, and the latter part of this verse is fulfilling—"He causeth them to wander in the "wilderness where there is no way." Christianity at first found them in a wilderness, and brought them out of it, but now by rejecting Christ they are got into it again: for every church without him is desolation. The finest system of religion, that the wit of man can dress up and delineate, is a wilderness without Christ. Let it be ever so artfully put together, yet unless it begin and end with him, it is but a mere desert. Lay the foundation of it ever so deep in the religion of nature, build it up ever so strong with morality, and adorn it ever so richly with metaphysics, yet it will be a mere delusive phantom, and of no use but to feed learned

pride. As Christ is not in it, furnish it with what you please, it will want all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of which the Christian church is full: for it is a building made of God, the foundation of it is laid upon the rock of ages, even upon Jesus Christ, and in him alone it is built up and supported. And it shall stand for ever, and be as beautiful as the paradise of God, when all human systems shall be in ruins; for this shall survive the flames of the great day, and all its members, with Christ at their head, shall ascend into the church triumphant with eternal glory. And then they who built a religion without Christ will be turned away into a wilderness indeed—even the wilderness of mere moralists, of the profane, and the infidel, unto the place appointed for their eternal reception and torment.

O what a melancholy and terrible state of things is this! and now let us consider, thirdly, how the prospect of it ought to affect us. And whatever our condition be, I think it must affect us greatly: for what grief of heart must it be to every true believer to see the church which once flourished and multiplied exceedingly, now thus diminished and brought low—to behold the interest of their sovereign Lord lost, and his princes contemptible, how afflicting is the thought! but it is indeed distressful, when the danger comes nearer to us, and we see the once fruitful church become a wilderness. Such as the poor ignorant heathens were before Christ came, such are we like to be, with this heavy circumstance to add to our misery, that they wished and longed for what we reject. They saw their want of a Saviour, and embraced the good tidings of the gospel with great joy. But we want no Saviour. Natural religion is enough for us. And the gospel in any other light, than as a system of morality is absolutely rejected. Thus we are in a worse condition by refusing Christ's offers of mercy, than the poor heathens were; and consequently our wilderness will be more dismal and melancholy than theirs. And how soon

our church may be turned into this wilderness God only knows: but of this I am certain, that we deserve it, and we have lately had many loud calls to prepare us for it, and some of his judgments are still heavy upon us, and unless they lead us to repentance, we must perish. Our destruction is at hand. And while our national sins are crying aloud for vengeance, O let every one of you, who have any interest in the Saviour of the world call aloud unto him for mercy. Let us pray without ceasing for the continuance of his blessed gospel among us. And let this consideration inflame our hearts, and add zeal to our devotion, that our Lord has promised to set the poor Christians on high out of the reach of affliction.

This is the fourth and last remark which belongs only to believers, who are of Christ's family and flock. Let the times be ever so bad and corrupt, they shall be safe—let the times be ever so tempestuous, they shall be set on high out of the reach of the storm. His grace shall keep them from corruption, and his almighty power shall defend them from the distresses of the times. What a sweet promise is this, and how full is it of consolation! God grant you may all taste the comforts of it, and then you will be thankful indeed. You will see how gracious a master we serve, and you will have reason to bless his holy name. He will pour down upon you, not contempt, but the riches of his free and unmerited graces: by which you will find, that though the Christians be few, and poor and mean, though the church be diminished low, yet the head of it is still the almighty God. Jesus has all power in heaven and earth, and he can give his followers, however the world may despise them, such joys as the world has not to give, and such, thanks be to him for it, as the world cannot take away. And these joys he here promises to them who are of his family and flock. And we know that he is faithful who hath promised. We have experienced his faithfulness. God grant you may all experience it this day, that you may happily

begin the new year. And though the weather be dull and cloudy like the state of the church, and the sun has not appeared for many days, O may the day star arise, and supply his place in all your hearts with a better light—and then you will go away thankful. And may the mercy of our most adorable Saviour be extended to this whole church and kingdom, as well as to this congregation. O may he send out his grace to reform the morals, and his good Spirit to stop the infidelity of our people. Blessed Jesus, spare them a little. Now the sound of the gospel is heard in our land, be pleased to accompany it with thy blessing. And if they to whose ears it is brought still reject it, then indeed they will deserve destruction. But in thy wrath, O think upon mercy. Spare thy people, O Lord, spare them, and turn not thine once fruitful heritage entirely and finally into the wilderness. Hear us, thou God of love, and answer our prayers to the glory of the Father, and the eternal Spirit——the Trinity in unity—to whom be equal honour, and worship, and praise, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

PSALM CVII. 42, 43.

The righteous shall see it, and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

THE holy Spirit finishes this divine hymn with these words. He here sums up the argument, and makes the application. His subject is thanksgiving. The argument used to inspire us with thankfulness is taken from redemption. And since redemption is the greatest blessing which the Almighty has to bestow upon his creatures, it is consequently the strongest argument for their thankfulness. In order to shew the greatness of the blessing, the all-wise author of this Psalm has painted under several images the exquisite distress and misery of mankind, before they were redeemed. And these images are just and expressive. They are founded in nature and drawn to the life. And all the redeemed of the Lord have seen their lost estate by sin, which is represented under these images, and can bear their testimony to the truth of the representation: they remember when they wandered in the wilderness out of the way—when they fell into the bondage and prison of sin—and were there sore diseased with its plagues—and always uneasy and disturbed, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, tossed and agitated with the storms of vice. The retrospect of these miseries now makes them thankful to their Redeemer, who shewed them the way out of the wilderness, by enlightening their understanding, who delivered them from the prison and bondage of sin by justifying them with his most precious blood, and he sent his word and healed them of all their plagues, by sanctifying them with the holy

anointing of his good Spirit, and thus he calmed and composed all the storms of vice, which had threatened their destruction. And then he placed them in the secure haven of the church, where they flourished and multiplied exceedingly. In the early ages of Christianity this part of the Psalm was fulfilled, when the first preachers carried the sound of the gospel into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world. But in these latter days the church is again diminished and brought low by the cruel oppressor, and by sin, and by misery. These are the three causes of its decay, and they have now reduced it into the same wretched state, in which it lay before it had the knowledge of redemption. But in these times of reproach and blasphemy the Redeemer has still a small flock left, over whom he watches with the care and affection of the most tender shepherd. And when he comes to destroy a wicked infidel church, he will set these poor humble Christians on high, out of the reach of affliction, and will make them families like a flock. The righteous "shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her "mouth. Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, "even they shall understand the loving kindness of the "Lord." God grant that every one of us may be wise to observe those things, and that we may have the true experimental understanding of the loving kindness of the Lord: and then we shall be able to join our thankful hearts and voices with the church militant and triumphant, and to ascribe praise, and honour, and glory to Jesus our redeeming God. And may the eternal Spirit now be present among us, and direct our hearts by his grace, enabling us to finish our meditations upon this Psalm, with that thankfulness and gratitude, with which he intended it should inspire us. And may this be the happy effect of our considering;

First, The sense and meaning of the words, which contain the application of the whole Psalm. The righteous shall see it. The word here rendered righteous is not what the scripture commonly uses to signify righ-

teous or justified persons; but it is another word, and conveys another idea. It signifies to direct, to set right; and the righteous here mentioned are they who are directed in the right way, and walk, as Enoch did, with God in his way, and not in the way of the world. And these shall see the goodness and mercy of God's dealings with the fallen race of men. They shall have eyes to see the ways of his providence. The same grace, which set them right, will manifest to them the reasonableness of the plan of redemption. They shall see and admire, and be thankful for, the wonders of his redeeming love, which are recorded in this divine hymn. While they read it, their own hearts will bear testimony to its truth; for it is a lively picture of their own state and condition. They well remember the time, when sin misled them, held them in bondage, and subjected them to all its diseases and storms: but so soon as they had a deep sense of their misery, and were disposed to seek the Redeemer's mercy, he was at hand, a God to save. When they cried unto the Lord Jesus in their trouble, he delivered them out of their distresses, and gave them a free and full redemption. Finding all this fulfilled in their own souls, have they not great reason to rejoice? the righteous shall see it, and rejoice. It shall be to them a matter of solid lasting joy; not like the crackling of thorns under a pot—a flashy transitory joy, which arises from a light vain mind, and which the world can give and take away; but the Christian joy is the fruit of the Spirit, produced by his gracious working upon the heart, shewing it the dangers which it has escaped, and the happy state into which it is brought, from whence springs what the scripture calls joy in the Holy Ghost: because it is entirely his gift. Nothing but his grace can enable sinners to rejoice in the Lord always, which we find they can: for this is the happy state of every pardoned sinner, that he can rejoice in God; so soon as he is admitted into Christ's kingdom, he is filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The sense of Christ's redeem-

ing love administers to him joy unspeakable and full of glory: as he told his apostles, "Ye shall be sorrow-"ful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and "your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh "from you." Every believer has found the truth of this scripture. After they had seen their lost estate by nature, and their souls were filled with anguish and bitterness at the sight of their guilt and misery, they cried unto the Lord Jesus for deliverance, and he came. His infinite love brought him with haste to save them, and he turned their sorrow into joy, giving them reason to rejoice with a gladness of heart, which no man can take from them. O! may the love of the almighty Jesus bestow this joy upon every one of you, and he will not withhold it from you, if you seek it. If you can but desire it, you will find him more ready to give, than you are to ask it. He shed his blood to purchase it for you; he bought it with an inestimable price, and the same love which disposed him to die, rather than you should be without this joy, still disposes him to bestow it. Go therefore to the throne of his grace. Ask, and ye shall have. And will you not go to him for it? Will you not receive it upon these easy terms? Have you no desire to attain that joy, which Christ alone can give? no desire to be pardoned, to be made just and holy, and to be filled with the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, and peace? If any one of you are in this wretched condition, stop—reflect a moment—and consider, what enemies you are to your own enjoyments, for you cannot live without joy. And what is your constant subject of rejoicing? If it be any thing in this world it is imperfect in its kind. You know it by experience. And it endures but a short time, and then it perishes, and you with it. And will you prefer this empty destructive joy, to that fulness and perfection of joy, which Jesus Christ has to give? Be ye assured, there is no true cause of rejoicing, but in him; and nothing that deserves the name of joy, but in the knowledge of what he hath done for our

souls. And would to God I could inform you perfectly of this knowldge: for if you had clear ideas of it, you could not avoid seeking and praying for it; but it is indeed beyond description. Joy in the holy Ghost is an earnest and a foretaste of heaven. O! may you seek until you find it, and may the blessed Spirit bring you into the happy number of the righteous, who see the wonders which the Redeemer has done for their salvation, and therefore rejoice. And when their joy is full, then all iniquity shall stop her mouth: the ridiculer and the blasphemer shall be silent. They shall be struck dumb, and not able to open their mouths against the Lord and against his Christ. They will no longer be able to object to that gracious plan of redemption, by which our God decreed to bring many sons unto glory: but all iniquity—all—without exception—every infidel champion, every treasonable society, every congregation of rebels shall stop their mouths. Lord, when are we to see this much desired day! O when shall the blasphemers of Jesus be silent! when shall it be no longer said, that God our Saviour is not self-existent, and equal in every perfection and attribute with the Father? When shall the infidel cease to tread under foot our most adorable God, and the wicked cease to crucify him afresh? Not I fear till the end: for while there are evil men, there will be railing and blasphemy. But there will be a day, when iniquity shall stop her mouth, and it is not far off. When our Lord shall come again in all his glory, then they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall see that the crucified Jesus is a God indeed; the lustre of his divine glory, infinitely beyond the brightness of the sun, will be to them insufferable, and confounded, abashed, silenced, they shall lay their hands upon their mouths. And when he pronounces the dreadful sentence upon them, never, never to be reversed, "go ye "cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and "his angels," then they shall not have one word to object—all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

Until this great day come, it is every Christian's part and duty to defend his Redeemer's cause: but it is more particularly incumbent upon us, who have taken his commission and are his ministers, to exert ourselves in his defence. Actuated by zeal for his honour, and by love to these precious souls, for whom he died, we should be unwearied in our labours. Every talent and gift, with which we are blessed, ought to be devoted to the promoting of his interest, and we should strive to bring as many as we possibly can over to it. And every person we gain is stopping one of the tongues of iniquity. And if we gain but few, yet we may bring such arguments in defence of the plan of redemption, that we may silence many. I hope the arguments in this Psalm will silence some. If they were well considered, they would silence all. And therefore we must call upon men and press them to consider what is here said: for the holy Spirit in the last words requires it of us, "Whoso is wise and will observe those things, even "they shall understand the loving kindness of the "Lord." "Whoso is wise," has the true wisdom that is from above, "will observe those things," will carefully note and remark what is here said of the fall and recovery of mankind, of our state by nature and by grace. True wisdom consists in observing these two things, what we are in ourselves, and what we are in Christ; in a deep sense of our misery by sin, stirring us up to seek our remedy in the Redeemer. This is wisdom. And whosoever is thus wise unto salvation "shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord," shall be able to apply what he understands of it to his own private use and benefit. The verb in the original rendered "shall understand," is, in the conjugation, called Hithpael, which signifies to act upon itself. Whoever observes those things properly, finds his own interest in them. He makes the understanding of them useful to himself. He does not study them as a science or theory, but as interesting points in which he is nearly concerned, and which he therefore tries to bring

home for his own private advantage. When he hears of the mercies of the Lord Jesus recorded in this Psalm, he desires to partake of them. When he hears of the great deliverances vouchsafed to sinful ruined man, he studies to have his own share in them. What is said of these persons who wandered out of the way in the wilderness, and fell into the bondage of sin, and were afflicted with its diseases, and troubled like a stormy sea with its continual tempests; all this he knows was his own case, and therefore what follows of their flourishing state after Christ delivered them may be his also, if he cry unto the Lord, as they did, for help. And he never ceases praying and seeking, until the blessed Jesus bring him to the haven of the church, where he would be. And if he find the church diminished and brought low, he is not discouraged; but relies on the promises of his God, who will set him on high out of the reach of public calamity, when he comes to destroy an infidel church. He observes what is said in this Psalm concerning those things, and he knows it to be true, by his own experience. And therefore the loving kindness of the Lord here recorded is to him a subject of exceeding great joy, because he has tasted of it. Whoso is wise will bring his knowledge of this Psalm home to his own heart, and he shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord, he shall be able to apply what he understands to his own benefit, and shall therefore be continually praising the Lord for his goodness, and declaring the wonders which he hath done for the salvation of men.

And here the holy Spirit ends, recommending to us the observation of those things, as the only wisdom, and exhorting us to apply what we understand of them to our own particular benefit, as the only use we can make of them. And if we can but observe and understand, until we find our interest in them, then his design in recording this Psalm will be answered, and we shall be thankful indeed: for thankfulness is only expressing with the mouth what the heart feels, and if the heart feels

itself entitled to the blessings of redemption, it will be impossible to restrain the tongue from praising the almighty God and Redeemer of the world. The redeemed soul can no more forbear to praise its Redeemer, than the body can forbear to breathe, so long as there is any life in it.

You may remember, that I set out at first with a general plan of the whole Psalm, and I need not here repeat it. You have heard each part explained, and have been shewn how each tends to carry on the general plan. You have seen how regular and beautiful it is altogether; how important the subject, how strong and striking the arguments. It is indeed a masterly painting of our lost estate by sin, which is here represented in various lights, the more forcibly to affect us, that finding our distress, and being disposed to cry out for deliverance, we may be the more thankful to the Redeemer, when he comes and brings us free and full redemption. For this end the holy Spirit inspired the Psalm, and for the same good purpose we have been considering it. God grant we may not have considered it in vain. It is a very weighty and solemn scripture, and contains the most powerful motives, which infinite wisdom itself could propose, both to convince us of our misery without a Redeemer, and also of our happiness in him, and these most powerful motives ought certainly to produce the greatest effects, they ought to fill our hearts with gratitude, and to raise us to the highest pitch of thankfulness; but if we have no better dispositions to be thankful to our blessed Redeemer, than we have had before we heard these motives, there must be some very bad cause in our own hearts: what it is I will endeavour to find out by applying myself,

First, To them who disbelieve the state of the case as it is laid down in this Psalm. The subject is thanksgiving. The motives used to excite in us a thankful temper are taken from the distressed estate of mankind by nature, and from their perfect recovery by grace. And no man can be unthankful, who has seen himself

in this lost condition, out of which he was brought by the free grace and mercy of the Redeemer. Such a person I say cannot be unthankful: because while he retains the sense of his former misery, and of his present happiness, his mind is always in a thankful temper, and he must lose this sense, before he can be indisposed to give thanks and praise to his redeeming God. This is the clear and plain state of the case. And the holy Spirit supposes, that the proper consideration of it would be sufficient to inspire us all with thankfulness; for when he comes to sum up the argument, he says, "whoso is wise," whosoever has the true wisdom, "will observe these things," will observe the great points treated of in this divine composition, and will endeavour to understand them in a practical way, by applying what he knows of them to the state of his own soul. And whenever he is thus wise, and has this right understanding, then he will be full of thanks and praise to the God of his salvation. Now there are men among us, who disbelieve all this, who deny the lost and fallen estate of mankind, and who talk of, I know not what, fancied dignity and rectitude in poor sinful worms; and although they see the whole face of the earth covered with sin, yet they will not allow that man is sinful. And thus they deny the very evidence of their senses, when it makes against infidelity, and are therefore greater enthusiasts, than mistaken religion ever did produce. A poor creature, who believes without evidence, is indeed an enthusiast; but the infidel, who disbelieves against evidence, is got to the very top of enthusiasm. All deists are rank enthusiasts, and of the worst kind; because they can refuse to believe their own senses, when they give evidence for Christianity. If there be any of them in this place, I must call upon them to observe those things, which are recorded in this Psalm. Consider, why you disbelieve them. What reason, what motive have you? If you would submit to the authority of scripture, it has determined, that we are altogether corrupt and abominable, and that there

fighting against God, and how then can they succeed, who oppose his covenant, confirmed by his revealed will, and established by his miraculous works? So long as this scripture stands upon record, it will overthrow all their attempts to lay any other foundation. Will the metaphysician think of laying his reason and the light of nature? It is written, Jesus Christ is the foundation, and there is no other. Will the moralist think of laying a system of ethics, and the religion of nature? Jesus Christ is the foundation, and there is no other. Will the Arian, Socinian, and other infidels think of being justified without the merits of the God-man? Jesus Christ is the foundation, and there is no other. In short, every doctrine and duty stands established upon him. He is the foundation of all: "for other foundation can no man lay, than that is "laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The scope and design of the words thus in part opened and explained, offer to our consideration the following truths:

First, Jesus Christ is the foundation of all saving knowledge.

Secondly, He is the foundation of all acceptance with God the Father.

Thirdly, He is the foundation of all holy obedience. And,

Fourthly, He is the foundation of all present and eternal happiness. And may the Spirit of the Lord Jesus direct our hearts to make a right use of this scripture under the First Particular, which was to prove, That he is the foundation of all saving knowledge.

By saving knowledge I understand all the knowledge which respects the salvation of sinners. And man, in his fallen state, neither has any of this knowledge, nor can he attain it by any means in his own power. His reasoning faculties in their highest refinement could never have discovered to him, how he might be pardoned: for when sin cut him off from all

communion with the Father of spirits, who is to the soul what the sun is to the body, it then deprived him of all spiritual discernment, and without the light of revelation he is unable to discover those objects, which can only be spiritually discerned. He is blind and ignorant in the things of God, and obstinate too in his ignorance. He is in the dark, and he loves darkness; and being a slave to the prince of the powers of darkness, he is taught to hate the light; and he hates it with a perfect hatred. He flies from it, lest his works should be manifest, and their horrid deformity should fill him with shame and painful conviction. While he is in this condition, and every man is in it by nature, the eyes of his understanding have no more perception of any spiritual object, than his bodily eyes would have of material objects, if there was no light to enlighten them. The organ of sight would remain, but then, without light, it would be of no more use than if it was quite destroyed. The scripture has given us a melancholy account of this spiritual darkness and blindness, and represents it to be so far above the power of nature to remove, that it was one principal end of Christ's coming from heaven to preach recovery of sight to the blind. And to enable him to recover it, the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon him without measure: for it required the power of an almighty Spirit to cure the obstinate blindness of a sinful world, who loved darkness rather than light. Read the first chapter of the Romans, and you will there find, what horrid deeds of darkness were, and always will be the fruits of nature, when left to its own fancied light. The apostle does not scruple to declare of the refined taste of this polite classical people, "that they were become vain in "their imaginations, and their foolish heart was dark-"ened." The imagination of their finest poets—even Virgil's imagination, St. Paul being judge, was vain. And Tully with his great parts, with his vast reading, and all his attainments, had a foolish heart, St. Paul being judge, and in the things of God was exceeding

dark. And this was true of the rest of the heathen world, as well as of the Romans. When St. Paul received his commission from Jesus Christ, it run in these words—"I send thee to the Gentiles to open their eyes, "and to turn them from darkness to light." And accordingly we find it the principal subject of his preaching and writing, to call them out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. (His Ephesians he cautions iv. 8.) "Not to walk as other Gentiles in "the vanity of their mind, having the understanding "darkened, being alienated from the life of God "through the ignorance that is in them, because of the "blindness of their heart." And lest this darkness and blindness should be supposed to take place only in the heathen world, the scripture has expressly declared it is the case of every son of fallen Adam—of whom not one in his natural state can attain to the knowledge of saving truth; "for the natural man receiveth not the "things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness "unto him, neither can he know them, because they "are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. And for want of this spiritual discernment, the apostle says, that the natural man, that is, every man in a state of nature, not only does not, but also cannot, there is an absolute impossibility that he should, know the things of the Spirit of God. Nay, when they are proposed to him, they appear to be foolishness, and he receiveth them not.

But why need I multiply texts in defence of a truth, for which scripture speaks so plain, and matter of fact speaks for itself. It is an undoubted truth, that there was no saving knowledge in the heathen world. We therefore call it heathen, because it wanted this Christian knowledge. What discoveries did the classical ages of Greece and Rome make in the doctrines of salvation? Rather, what had they not done to obliterate the scope and intent of the ceremonies, which God had instituted to keep up the knowledge of these doctrines? The very traces of them were so entirely lost, that

among the numerous altars in the famous university of Athens, there was but one erected to any thing like divinity, and that was to an unknown God. St. Paul made an excellent use of this inscription, taking occasion from it to preach Christianity to the Athenians, and assuring them that this God, confessedly unknown, was Jesus Christ: and if a faith in him, that purifies the heart, and that works in an holy life, be the basis of saving knowledge, then neither Greeks nor Romans had any of it: for in none of their authors do we find the least mention made of the nature, virtue, and efficacy of the purifying faith in Jesus Christ.

And this matter of fact is confirmed by every day's experience. Are we not forced to teach children the first rudiments of letters, and as their minds open, the first rudiments of saving knowledge? Is not a Christian education every where acknowledged to be necessary, as well to restrain and subdue the headstrong passions of corrupt nature, as to instil the wholesome truths of Christian faith and obedience? And are there not in every country, schools and universities founded for these laudable purposes? And when we leave these places of education, does not every good steward of the mysteries of God still find the necessity of continual study and application to the written word, that he may be able out of his treasure to bring forth things new and old for his own and his people's instruction in righteousness; and these circumstances may convince us, that we are naturally blind and ignorant in the saving truths of the gospel. We know only as much as we are taught. Without the light of revelation, the inhabitants of England would be no wiser in the things of God, than the inhabitants of the deserts of Africa—the same spiritual darkness would cover both lands, the same gross darkness the people. And whether they be polite or savage it makes no difference, until the sun of righteousness arise to dispel their heavy night of ignorance: for what the sun is to the natural world, such is Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness, to the spiritual

world. The scripture hath set him forth as the only light of the spirits of men, from whom all saving knowledge must flow: for he was made unto us wisdom, says the apostle. In his divine nature wisdom, perfect and infinite wisdom is essentially inherent. He is the all-wise God, in whom are stored all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which he was pleased, as our Saviour, to open for our use and to communicate. The word of God most high is the fountain of wisdom, from whom by the covenant of grace it was to flow; and ever since the fall it has been flowing in the richest streams. And from him every sinner must be enlightened before he can enter into the light of life: for he said of himself, "I am the light of the world;" and he must fulfil his word by enlightening every dark benighted soul, until the number of the elect, the children of light shall be perfected, and then he will shine for ever in the fulness of glory in the heavenly Jerusalem: for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in his light for ever and ever. Thus the light has been and always will be the glorious title of the incarnate God. He took this name to denote his gracious office of enlightening our blind and dark understandings. Under this character the prophet Isaiah speaks of him (ix. 2.) "The people that walked "in darkness have seen a great light, they that dwell "in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath "the light shined." These words are applied to Christ by an infallible interpreter. St. Matthew makes them relate to Christ's being a light to lighten the Gentiles. And again in the same prophet the Lord saith (xlix. 6.) "It is too little a thing that thou shouldst be my "servant to raise up only the tribes of Jacob, and to "restore the preserved of Israel, I will also give thee "for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my "salvation to the ends of the earth." Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiii. 47.) apply these words to Christ: he was the true light, the day-spring from on high that visited

the Gentiles, to give them the knowledge of salvation, for if the eyes of them who sit in darkness and the shadow of death be ever opened, if they see that they have lost the way to heaven, if they desire to walk in it, and are enabled to go on steadfastly unto the end, all this is the work of the divine light, in whom whosoever believeth shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

From these scriptures it is evident, that every man who cometh into the world is by nature dark and blind in the things of God. Sin blinded his eyes, and left him without the least spiritual discernment. The intellectual faculty indeed is not totally destroyed. The organ of sight is not annihilated. It remains, but not enlightened. It is in the same state our eyes would be, if the sun, moon, and stars were to withhold their shining, and not one ray of light was left in the creation. If men could live in this gross darkness, the organ of sight would not be destroyed, but it would be quite useless. All things would be invisible, because whatsoever doth make manifest is light. And this is the state of the soul: for the eye of the soul can no more see without its proper light, than the eye of the body can see without its proper light. And what the sun is to the body, that is Christ to the soul. He is the light of the world, not of this outward world, which is abundantly supplied from the fountain of created light, but he is the light of the spiritual world, which lay in darkness and the shadow of death, until he arose with healing under his wings, and brought with him from heaven the reviving light of life.

Upon the authority of God's word these truths are established. The evidence for them is clear and full. If our bodily eyes cannot see without light, it is equally certain, that our spiritual eyes cannot see without Christ: because both are spoken of in the same language, and under the same expressions. And as he is the Lord God omnipotent, he is certainly able to enlighten the darkest soul; and as he is God incarnate,

he is engaged to do it. He will use his almighty power, and if he give the word, "Let there be light," there will be light. Upon the strength of this evidence we must believe, that it is the name, and the office, and the glory of Jesus Christ, to be the light of the faithful through this dark wilderness of sin and sorrow.

Convinced of this, there is an important enquiry to be made, without which our conviction will be of no use, and that is, Have we reduced it to practice? Since Christ is the foundation of all saving truth, have we been led to seek it from him, and him only? In our studies of divine learning do we always read the scripture with humility and prayer, desiring in the royal Psalmist's words, which are devout and short, and which contain an excellent prayer always to be used before we open a bible, "Lord open thou mine eyes, "that I may see wondrous things in thy law." And in our studies of human learning have we taken Christ for a light to guide us and bless us, that we might attain more understanding than the aged. Rather have we not robbed the eternal light of his name, and office, and glory, by seeking saving truth from the light of nature? If God be true, and the scriptures which I have read by his word—nature is dark and blind. To talk of the light of fallen nature, and all nature is fallen, is more absurd than to talk of the darkness of light. There cannot be a more wicked contradiction to God and his word, to experience and matter of fact, than for men professing Christianity to talk about the light of sinful, dark, and blind nature: neither can there be a greater insult offered to the incarnate God, than to seek that light which he was made incarnate on purpose to give, from metaphysics, or any science, that pretends to manifest spiritual objects without revelation: neither can there be a greater crime, than to think of seeing and reasoning *à priori*, because this is God's incommunicable attribute, of which he is so jealous, that for pretending to it we were all cast out of paradise. In honour then to the God whom we wor-

ship, and out of love to our own souls, let us talk no more of the light of fallen nature; let us degrade the unnatural science of metaphysics, and forget all abstracted reasonings; they can give us no light in the things of God, but what is borrowed, and it is fainter than the faintest stars: and were they brighter than they are, yet when the sun arises, his superior lustre hides their pale and glimmering rays. God be praised, the sun of righteousness has arisen among us in perfect beauty, and false science is hiding her head. He shines with his noon-day glory upon this highly-favoured church. Long may he shine unrivalled by any fancied light of fallen nature. And may his brightest beams enlighten this university, that every member of it, guided by his word and Spirit, may receive the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

If it should be enquired, in what manner Christ enlightens the spirits of men, whether it be in some certain regular way, or he has left no sure direction in this case: The answer is, God has established the means of grace for this very purpose, of which his word is the principal; "For the commandment is a lamp, and the "law is light:" And when his good Spirit accompanies the hearing or reading of the word, then it is indeed a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths. Then the word discovers to us the wretched darkness of our natural state, strips reason of all its high and divine titles, and thereby humbles us before God, and brings us low before his footstool, waiting upon him in all the means of grace, and particularly in prayer, that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may shine into our dark and sinful hearts. To expect this light without the use of the instituted means is enthusiasm; and to expect to keep this light, after you once have it, without continuing in the use of these means, is the very madness of enthusiasm. In them God has promised to be found of those that seek him. Out of them you have no promise; and you may as reasonably hope

God will create a new light for you to read by in the night, as that he will enlighten you without the established means, without prayer, and the word and sacraments. And therefore whenever you are tempted to entertain such hopes, be assured it is a delusion of the devil's, and beware at the peril of your souls, lest the light which you suppose to be in you be darkness: for "remember it is written, Woe be unto them, that put "darkness for light, and light for darkness." In order to keep clear of this woe, let us wait in the use of the appointed means, and then we may with truth and soberness expect, that Christ will enlighten us with all saving truth, and particularly with a full and practical conviction of that great truth, which I proposed to consider in the second place, viz. That Jesus Christ is the foundation of all acceptance with God the Father.

The same sinfulness which darkened the faculties of the soul, and separated us from God, stirred up his holiness, and justice, and truth against us. Against these attributes we had sinned, and they were become our enemies, and until they received full satisfaction, God the Father would not accept us. He declared under the law that he would accept nothing in atonement but what was perfect, and perfection is not in the sinner. The sacrifices were to be without blemish. This was the standing rule—"Whatsoever hath a blemish, that "shall ye not offer, for it shall not be acceptable "for you—and whosoever offereth a peace-offering or "a free-will offering, it shall be perfect, to be accepted, "there shall be no blemish therein." (Lev. xxii. 20, 21.) This was both to shadow out the absolute perfection of our holy, harmless, and undefiled high-priest, who should by the one offering of himself make a perfect satisfaction for sin, and also to convince the sinner of his utter inability to make any satisfaction: For the sinfulness of his nature, and the sinfulness of his life would render ever thing he could do imperfect and sinful, until he should be accepted in the beloved.

Men are not much affected with the sinfulness of their

nature until Christ enlighten them. Sin which first blinded their eyes, by its deceitfulness keeps them blinded. And although the fountain of iniquity, the corrupt heart within, is always sending out filthy streams, yet it gives them little uneasiness until the divine light break in, and lay open to view its impurity. Then the sinner finds and confesses, that he is by nature a child of wrath. He freely subscribes to the scripture account of the corruption of mankind, as it is described by Moses and the prophets, and expressly treated of in the 14th and 53d Psalms, upon which St. Paul has given us a comment in the 3d chapter of the Romans, and he sums it up in these emphatical words: "for all have sinned "and come short of the glory of God."

If any doubt should remain concerning the meaning of these scriptures, our church has removed it in her 9th article, where she determines, that "original sin "standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pela-"gians do vainly talk) but it is the fault and corrup-"tion of the nature of every man, that naturally is en-"gendered of the off-spring of Adam, whereby man is "very far gone from original righteousness, and is "of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh "lusteth always contrary to the Spirit, and therefore in "every person born into the world it deserveth God's "wrath and damnation." This is a truly scriptural account of man's sinful and guilty state by nature, to which add the sinfulness of his life, and you separate him still farther from God: for what man is he that liveth and sinneth not? And sin is the transgression of the law—and the law is holy, just and good—it is so pure and spiritual, that it cannot overlook the least offence. It must have perfect unerring obedience in thought, word, and deed, or it puts the offender under the curse: for it is written, "Cursed is every one, "who continueth not in all things that are written in "the book of the law to do them." You must continue (without intermission) in all things (not keeping nine commandments and breaking the tenth, not keeping

them all outwardly, and breaking them in thought) that are written in the book of the law to do them; not only to purpose well, and to make good resolutions, but you must also do and execute them, or the law can shew you no mercy. And which of us has kept the law in this perfect manner? Who can say, that he never offended in thought, word, or deed? Certainly every mouth must be stopt, and all the world must plead guilty before that righteous judge, who trieth the very hearts and reins.

Now God has already past the decree against a sinful nature, and against a sinful life. "The soul that "sinneth it shall die." God is faithful and just to fulfil his decrees—he is almighty to execute them—and what can man do under a state of guilt and condemnation to reverse them? Two things are requisite, each of which are as much out of his power as to create a world. He must first change his own nature, which is like the Ethiopian's changing his skin, and he must be renewed in the spirit of his mind with every sweet and holy temper. And then this change wrought by himself must make a full satisfaction to the holiness of God for his past pollution, to the justice of God for the violation of his laws, and to the truth of God, that he may be true, and yet remit the threatened punishment. But alas! man has neither will nor power to change his nature: who can say I have made my heart clean—I am pure from my sin? No man can truly say, I have done it: for it is God's work. To create a clean heart, is as great an act, as to create the heart at first; and accordingly we find the prophet praying to God for it—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right "spirit within me." And until God create a clean heart, how can any thing clean proceed from it? Who in an impure nature can do a pure action? Who under the curse of the law, and under the sentence of condemnation, can perform a meritorious service? Who by his own works can attain such perfect unspotted righteousness, that God the Father will accept him in virtue of

it? The scripture hath determined that there is none righteous, no not one, and that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified; and our church has determined the same in her articles and homilies, affirming that we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not for our own works or deservings.

A great part of the mistakes in religion arises from men's not attending to these truths. They have not a deep conviction of their lost estate by nature, which occasions their not seeing in its proper light the necessity of their recovery by grace. The malady of a sinful heart is not painful enough to make them apply to the sovereign physician: nor is the burden of a sinful life heavy enough to persuade them to seek the comfort of this scripture—"Come unto me, all ye that are "weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But when conscience alarms them, when guilt terrifies, and they read the sentence of condemnation past upon them in the law, then helpless and miserable in themselves, with transports of joy will they receive the glad tidings of the gospel, which discovers to them how they may be reconciled to an offended God. To such persons, whose eyes the Lord has opened to see their guilt and their misery, the gospel sets forth Jesus Christ as the sole foundation of their acceptance. We are said to be accepted in the Beloved, who came in our nature to work out that perfect righteousness for us, which infinite holiness, and justice, and truth required, and which we could not by our own power attain; but by the merits of his obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection, he is able to clothe us with the immaculate robe of his righteousness, in which we shall be presented before God the Father without spot of sin unto salvation.

It must be always remembered, that our Saviour was God and man united in one Christ; by which union whatever he did and suffered for us became truly divine and infinite. Jesus shed his blood, and the scripture says it was the blood of God. Jesus died for us, and

the scripture says, that God laid down his life. In what sense can these expressions be understood, unless the Godhead and manhood were united in one person? This fundamental doctrine of God's being in Christ reconciling the world unto himself must never be forgotten, when we are speaking of the merits of Christ's actions and sufferings. Our nature was impure and corrupt, the imaginations of our hearts were only evil continually. Christ came in a pure spotless nature, separate from sinners, that whatever he did for them might appear without blemish before God the Father. He began his ministry with resisting the devil and all his temptations, to atone for our yielding to them; for us he conquered, and from his conquest, grace is derived to the faithful to resist all his temptations. Then he obeyed the law; its purity, its spirituality, its extensiveness, could find in him no transgression in thought, word, or deed. Its highest demands were answered: for according to its utmost rigour, "he continued in all things that are written in the book of the "law to do them." And thus he redeemed us from the curse of the law, and as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Then he humbled himself to suffer what we ought to have suffered for our disobedience. The holy innocent Jesus bore our griefs and carried our sorrows throughout the scene of his bitter passion. See him on the eve of the crucifixion in the garden, alone, prostrate upon the cold ground, in an extreme sharp night, and lo! at the sight of that load which he was going to take upon him, a preternatural sweat flows through his raiment, and falls to the ground in great drops. Oh cursed sin! with what an holy hatred ought we to crucify thee, since the prospect only of the number and guilt of our sins, and the wrath and vengeance of the Father due to them, forced our blessed Lord to sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Being apprehended, he came as a free, ready victim to bear those sufferings, of

which we cannot form a perfect idea at present, and unless the vengeance of a justly offended God should hereafter pour the vials of his wrath upon our guilty heads, we shall never know them. God grant that Christ may have endured them for every one of us. The outward part of his passion was but a faint picture of what he endured, when the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and yet of the outward part he might truly say, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass "by, Behold and see if ever there was any sorrow like "unto my sorrow," &c. The shame that ought to cover all our faces he endured; for us the guilty, and shameless in guilt, if by continuing in sin we put him again to an open shame, he was despised and rejected of men; he was mocked, and derided, and spit upon, buffeted and scourged, crowned with thorns and blindfolded, falsely accused, and falsely condemned. Then behold him bearing his cross. When we see him fainting and sinking under the load, and his face and raiment covered with blood, does it not bring to mind what he says of himself in the book of Psalms? "The "ploughers ploughed upon my back and made long "furrows"—they ploughed up his back with the long and deep wounds of their stripes and scourges; but by these stripes we were healed. Nay, he says more in another Psalm, that he was so wounded from head to foot, there was no whole part in his body: and you cannot doubt of it, if you raise your eyes to the cross, and see the suffering bleeding Lamb of God in the last scene of his passion. And yet this was the least part of his sufferings. "Give me any grief," says the wise man, "but the grief of the mind, for a wounded spirit "who can bear?" Who indeed can bear a spirit wounded of God? When Jesus was in the garden, his soul was exceeding sorrowful, was in an agony, even unto death; but these were only the beginning of sorrows. When he took upon him the iniquities of us all, and almighty justice finding them upon him demanded full satisfaction, and received it to the utter-

most farthing, then he had a wounded spirit, such as all the men upon earth, no, not all the holy angels in heaven could have sustained for a moment. He bore it for six hours hanging upon the cursed tree, until all was finished; then he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. And thus he was made sin for us, and suffered for our sins, who knew no sin himself, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him: and he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and tasted death for every man. He died to save our souls and bodies from the power of death. And he rose again, that we might receive justification to life, that our souls might arise here from the grave of sin, and that our bodies might in God's good time arise from the grave of death, and both of them, united in a glorified state, might receive eternal life as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And being thus made perfect through obeying and suffering, through death and resurrection, he became the author of eternal salvation. He wrought out such perfect righteousness to be imputed unto sinners, that he is now able to save them to the uttermost. He has the infinite merit of his obedience to atone for their disobedience. He has the infinite merit of his sufferings to free them from suffering. He died, to save them from the first and the second death. He rose again, that they might rise to a newness of life here in grace, and to life everlasting in glory. And he is now the one Mediator between God and man, able and willing to plead the fulness of his merits for the acceptance of every sinner, who comes unto God the Father through him. From

Hence it follows, That Jesus Christ is the foundation of our acceptance. If God the Father ever receive us as just and righteous, it must be in the perfect righteousness of his Son. We must be accepted in the Beloved; in whom the Father was well pleased, and through whom he will be well pleased, with us. The passages before cited clearly prove, that this is the

doctrine of all scripture. The Psalmist has given us the sentiments of the Old Testament worthies—"I will "go in the strength of the Lord God—I will make "mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." And God forbid that we, under the New Testament, should make mention of any other. Shall we go about to establish our own righteousness in opposition to the righteousness of God? Or shall we, under the guilt of original and actual sin, think of working out any righteousness for which we shall be accepted in part or altogether? If we could, then Christ obeyed and suffered in vain. If we could attain saving knowledge by the light of nature, and could act agreeably to it by the law of nature, then of what use would be the light and law of the gospel? But nature has no light, it is dark and blind in the things of God, and what can its law be, that is discovered by a dark and blind nature, but darkness and blindness? Nay, it is something worse. If fallen nature has any law, it is the law of the members, which warreth against the law of God, and bringeth a man into captivity to the law of sin. This is the only law of nature to be met with in the word of God: for nature is fallen and corrupt; it is depraved in the will and affections, as well as ignorant in the understanding. It is always inclined and prone to evil; "for the flesh" (which stands in scripture for the fallen depraved affections of the natural man) "lusteth al-"ways against the spirit, and the spirit against the "flesh, and these two are contrary the one to the "other"—the will of the natural man is always contrary to the will of God; from hence it follows, that what is called the religion of nature, is contrary to the religion of God: because nature used with religion confines it to man's nature, no other nature being concerned in the question; and man's nature is fallen and corrupt, sinful in the fountain, and sinful in the streams, and what then can the religion be, which this nature is able to discover and to practise? Certainly it must be a blind and corrupt religion. Jesus Christ makes no

part of it. He is not the foundation upon which it stands. The finest system of the religion of nature that ever was delineated builds nothing upon him, and since there is no other foundation but him, consequently it stands upon nothing. And if the heart was not corrupt as well as blind, it would be unaccountable what should tempt men with the pure word of God in their hands, which is able to make them wise unto salvation, to neglect it, and to write, and read, and study those antichristian systems, which can teach no wisdom, but what is earthly, sensual, devilish.

Men and brethren, be not offended; it behoves me to use great plainness of speech. If I was to speak smooth things, and to give flattering titles to the religion of nature, I should not be the servant of Christ; for this religion was set up, and has been used to hurt his interest, and when we see it has succeeded, surely it is high time for those servants, who love their master's praise more than the praise of men, to set themselves strenuously against it. Happy will it be for this place, if the noble company of his servants should increase, until the religion of nature has not one admirer left. Jesus Christ will be exalted among you in proportion as the religion of nature falls in esteem: and he has promised, "them that honour me, I will "honour." Honour Jesus Christ, and exalt him above all, and then his highest honours shall descend upon this university, and he will make her very enemies to be at peace with her. Oh for that happy day, when the honour that is of God shall be sought after as the crown and reward of all your studies. And why need we doubt it? We have an earnest before our eyes. Do we not see the religion of nature losing its interest every day? Do not men begin to be afraid of trusting the vast concerns of eternity upon it? And have they not good reason? For has it not appeared, from what has been said, that its first principles are antichristian? They suppose man's natural faculties to be able to in-

vestigate the things of God—Scripture absolutely denies it. They suppose he has will and power to act agreeably to the will of God—Scripture absolutely denies that he has either will or power. They suppose that, by practising the duties of natural religion, you may altogether or in part render yourselves acceptable to God—Scripture absolutely denies this, declaring that there is no other foundation of acceptance but Jesus Christ. And besides, the religion of nature manifestly tends to rob the God of our salvation of his glory, and to lessen the merits of his righteousness, as much as scripture tends to exalt both. And both are exalted, wherever the scripture is received pure and unmixed with human systems; and we have melancholy experience of the contempt offered to both, wherever the religion of nature is embraced. The doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, on which all scripture stands, makes no part of this religion. So that the religion of the Bible and the religion of nature have different objects of worship. The Christian worships one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; but this is rank idolatry with the natural man, who adores one supreme being, a metaphysical divinity, existing in one person, with certain imaginary attributes, such as infinitely extended, filling all space, &c.—Hence he explodes the divinity of Jesus Christ.—Hence he despises the authority of his laws.—Hence that dissoluteness of morals throughout the kingdom, which all men see, and even the professors of natural religion confess. Would to God they were convinced, what a great share they have in it, and how much of it they have to answer for. It would be for their present and eternal peace, if, instead of maintaining and teaching this unscriptural religion, which is the sink of heresy and corruption, they would join their hearts and hands in exalting the religion of Jesus Christ, and his infallible word, wherein that religion is contained, and in labouring to bring the lives as well as the opinions of men into obedience to it. How highly it is incumbent

upon you, my brethren, to promote this much-desired reformation, I need not further urge at present, than by reminding you of a very awful truth, to which we have all set our hands, and may God set our hearts to act agreeably to it. What I mean is the 18th article of our church, wherein we have declared, "They "also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, "that every man shall be saved by the law or sect "which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame "his life according to that law, and the light of na-"ture. For holy scripture doth set out unto us only "the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved." In this article we have given in our public testimony before God and his church against the light and the law of nature, and with our own mouths have put both of them under the curse. And shall we with the same mouths afterwards preach up the light and law of nature, and pronounce them blessed? God forbid. I hope his good Spirit will keep us free from this monstrous guilt, and enable us in all our preaching to set forth only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved.

But it may be here enquired, if man in a state of nature be at enmity with God, and can be accepted only through Jesus Christ, by what means shall he seek this reconciliation? The scripture has given us this plain and easy method. God the Father accepts us through the all-perfect righteousness of Christ; this righteousness is imputed unto us by faith; and the true living faith is a divine grace wrought in the soul by the giver of every good and perfect gift. It is not the result of comparing evidence, and of giving the assent to the strongest arguments: for a man may do this without the least grain of saving faith: but it is, according to St. Paul, the gift of God—And in another place he calls it one of the fruits of the Spirit—And St. Peter says, it is God that purifieth the heart by faith. He enables the sinner, who finds his want of Christ's righteousness, to seek it, and to lay hold of it: for whoever

hungers and thirsts after Christ's righteousness, has a promise, that he shall be filled, even filled with peace and joy in believing that this righteousness is imputed unto him, and with the love of God, which is shed abroad in his heart by the holy Spirit. And if there be any truth in God or man, this promise is now fulfilled, and every one that enters into our Lord's kingdom finds righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Some persons think they can easily evade the force of this reasoning by suggesting it to be possible, that all this may be a delusion. If a man is not acquainted with the scripture marks of true faith, and is not careful to compare them with his own experience, possibly he may be deluded, and fancy, that God has accepted him, when he has not. But if he sets out deeply convinced of his want of faith, waits for it in the instituted way, in that way receives it, and the effects of true faith follow upon receiving it, then if such a person may be deluded, there is no certainty in the world. The scriptures were written to direct us in these points, and they are so plain, that the way-faring man, though foolish, cannot err therein. They have given us one infallible rule to guide our enquiries, which is to examine the nature of faith by its purifying virtue. Wherever the true faith is, it purifies the heart, cleansing it from the pollution and from the guilt of sin, and destroying also the dominion of sin, so that the believer daily grows in grace, and goes on in his Christian course, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

If faith does not work thus in an holy life, it is indeed a delusion. What doth it profit my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, and have not works? If he have not a working faith, an active operative grace, purifying the heart from sin, and producing in the clean heart all the fruits of the Spirit, he wants the scripture marks of true faith; and let him talk ever so much, and be ever so strongly persuaded of his acceptance

with God, he is in a dangerous delusion. It is but a dead thing, which he supposes to be the living faith: for it is written, "As the body without breath is dead, "so faith without works is dead also." Works are the breath of faith. If it be alive it will breath, as certainly as the living body breathes. If it have no breath, no works to evidence its life, the scripture looks upon it to be a dead carcase; but if it breathes, and acts, and abounds in every good word and work to the glory of God, and to the service of men, then we may with as much certainty pronounce it to be the true faith, as we can pronounce the body to be alive, when it is able to perform all the offices of its animal life: for as the body while it breathes is alive, so faith while it works is alive also. In this case there can be no delusion: because we follow the sure rule laid down for our direction, By their fruits ye shall know them. How can we mistake the fruits of the Spirit for the fruits of the flesh? Is not every tree known by its own fruit? Do men ever think of gathering figs of thorns, or grapes of a bramble-bush? The fruits of grace, and of fallen nature, are as opposite as the two spirits which produce them. The one abounds in the works of the flesh, the other crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts. The one fills the mind with spiritual pride, envy, and malice, the other begins with humility, and works by love. The one lives in open transgression of the laws of God, the other conforms his words and works, and even the thoughts of his heart, to the standard of scripture. Can you see these different fruits, and be at a loss to determine, who is the author of each? Surely we want no evidence to disprove the pretences of an adulterer, a fornicator, an unclean person, and the rest mentioned by the apostle. Their lives speak their want of faith. By their fruits we see that they have not the root of the matter within them, because they hold the truth in unrighteousness. They must either have deluded themselves, or else they are downright hypocrites: for it is of the very essence of

true faith to destroy sin, and to work in an holy obedience. When we are accepted in the Beloved, and faith in his blood has purified our hearts, then we are, through his grace, both prepared and also able to shew this work of faith in our lives and conversations; and this point comes to be considered under the third head, which was to prove, That Jesus Christ is the foundation of all holy obedience. But this I must leave for the subject of another discourse, and would only observe at present from what has been said, that since Christ is the foundation of all saving knowledge, it is our duty to seek it from him in all means of grace, and especially in the word: for the commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes. Whoever hears and reads it with humility and prayer, will find the eyes of his understanding enlightened. He will see clearly the things of God, and will see more clearly, than others can, the useful arts and sciences. If he study them under the direction of divine grace, and with a view to the divine glory, the eternal light will shine into his heart, and give him more understanding than his teachers. And since Jesus Christ is the foundation of our acceptance with God the Father, let us seek to be accepted through faith, and never think of setting up any righteousness of our own in opposition to his. He is the Lord our righteousness, through whose merits imputed unto us by faith, God will receive us as just and righteous. And may the holy Spirit give you the practical conviction of these two important truths, that you may find the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, and may, through his all-perfect righteousness, be presented before God the Father without spot of sin unto salvation; to whom with the Son and the holy Spirit, three persons in the unity of the Godhead, be equal glory, worship, and praise, in the church militant and triumphant, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON. II.

1 Cor. iii. 11.

Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

From the scope and design of these words, which were opened in a former discourse, it was proposed to consider the following particulars:

First, That Jesus Christ is the foundation of all saving knowledge.

Secondly, He is the foundation of all acceptance with God the Father.

Thirdly, He is the foundation of all holy obedience. And,

Lastly, He is the foundation of our present and eternal happiness.

Under the first head it was proved, that man's natural ignorance and blindness in the things of God made it necessary he should be enlightened. Jesus Christ came into the world to open the blind eyes, and to be a light to them that sat in darkness. He says of himself, "I am the light of the world, and whosoever "believeth in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall "have the light of life." He is as truly the light of the spiritual, as the sun is the light of the material world, and whoever seeks to be enlightened with any saving truth, must receive it from the gracious influence of his divine rays. And under the

Second head man's natural corruption, and actual sinfulness, were considered. The holiness, justice, and truth of God could not accept the sinner, while he lay in this state of pollution and guilt, and he could do nothing to deliver himself from it, but must have lived here and for ever separated from God, unless Jesus

Christ had obeyed and suffered, died and risen again, to work out that perfect righteousness, through the merits of which, imputed unto the sinner by faith, God the Father will now accept him, and receive him as just and righteous into his love and into his heaven. From whence it follows, by direct consequence, that until he be thus accepted he can do no good works, which comes to be considered under the

Third head, viz. that Jesus Christ is the foundation of all holy obedience. Man in his natural state cannot perform any holy obedience. He wants both will and power, until his person be accepted through Jesus Christ and united to him by true and lively faith. The doctrine of our church upon this point is very clear and full. In the 13th article, entitled, "Of works before justification," she teaches that—"Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." Our works are not acceptable, until we have the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit to render our persons accepted. Nay the very best works we can do, if they be not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, have certainly in them the nature of sin. "We doubt not but they have the nature of sin," is a very strong expression: but our pious reformers could not soften it. They had left the bishop of Rome upon account of the doctrine of merit, which the Papists hold, and it is the most dangerous of all their tenets: for hereby they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. All the reformers joined in asserting justification by faith only, knowing that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to every one that be-

lieveth. It is impossible to be more clear and express against the merit of works, than the compilers of our articles and homilies are; they seem to have been guided in their opinion by two principal reasons, both taken from scripture, the first respecting God, the second ourselves.

It is impossible to do any good works well pleasing to God, until we are accepted in Christ, because our whole nature is sinful—in it dwelleth no good thing, and without the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, no good thing can ever dwell. The scripture declares us to be by nature children of wrath. We became objects of God's wrath, when, by the original offence, mankind transgressed his holy, just, and good law. Then his holiness, justice, and goodness became concerned to inflict the threatened punishment, which they did inflict, and to which every son of Adam is subject, until he be accepted through Jesus Christ. In this fallen state he is like an attainted rebel, who cannot do any action that is deemed good and valid in law, until his attainder be reversed, and he be restored in blood. This is our very case in spirituals. What can we do, that will be deemed good and valid in the court of heaven, while we are under a state of forfeiture, our persons are guilty, and our whole nature (as our church expresses it) deserves God's wrath and damnation?

And we are still more incapable of doing any acceptable works, if we consider the state we are in by actual transgression. We are under sentence of condemnation for the first offence: for the law is of so pure and spiritual a nature as to reach to the inmost thoughts of the heart. It requires truth in the inward parts, and expects perfect obedience there, as well as in the words and actions. The stile of it is, "Do this, and thou "shalt live." It promises life, but to them only, who never err from its commandments. One single failing cuts us off from the promised life, and puts us under the curse: for it is written, "Cursed is every man

"who continueth not in all things written in the book "of the law to do them." Now the same law, which has brought him in guilty before God cannot acquit him afterwards; because he is already a convict, is sentenced, and under the curse, and he can think of no method of escaping the deserved punishment, but to pay an unerring obedience for the future. Supposing he could do this, yet it would be making no satisfaction; because after one transgression by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified. It is an adjudged case, that partial obedience can make no atonement to the law, which required perfect obedience: the equity of this proceeding we acknowledge in our own laws. If a criminal, found guilty of murder, was to allege in his defence, that he had broken no other law of the land, that he was not a thief, nor an adulterer, &c. would this plea be allowed in court? Would he be acquitted of the murder, because it was not attended with robbery? No. The judge would observe to him, that he came there to be tried for a murder, and that he was found guilty by the law, and as such must be condemned: for he that said, Thou shalt not steal, said also, Thou shalt do no murder. Now if thou commit no robbery, yet if thou kill, thou art a transgressor of the law: for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all, and is under guilt and condemnation, as if he had offended against the whole law. The law of God is pure and spiritual, and allows of no deviation from it. If it gives life, it must have perfect unerring obedience: where this is wanting in one instance, it cannot take partial obedience as any atonement for disobedience: from whence it follows, that men under the guilt of original and actual sin cannot, with respect to God, perform any holy obedience. And

With respect to ourselves, there is another reason, which being taken from a matter of fact, should carry with it full conviction. Our fallen nature is so entirely depraved, that it has neither will nor power to perform

any holy obedience. The old man of sin, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, can do nothing but sin. And until he be put off and crucified with all his affections and lusts, we cannot put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness: for we are not only corrupt, but also under the bondage of corruption: not only sinners, but also slaves to sin, sold under sin, and led captive to commit it by the devil at his will. Sin has such an absolute dominion, that although it exercises the most cruel tyranny, yet men have no desire to shake off its yoke. Sin wears away their bodies in its service, and yet they are pleased with their own destruction, and sin on. Whenever the tyrant commands—Do this, the natural man doeth it, though it be at the peril of his life. When sin puts him upon a course of uncleanness, which he knows will bring the infirmities of old age upon him before he has come to manhood, or a course of intemperance, which must end in painful and acute distempers, the poor slave submits. And must not sin reign in his mortal body, since he thus obeys it in the lusts thereof? Must it not have absolute dominion over him, since he thus yields his members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, and yields them, even to work out his own destruction? And when he sees this destruction before his eyes, yet he has no desire to avoid it; we have neither will nor power to deliver ourselves from sin's dominion: because when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. The soul was enslaved, and without strength to recover its liberty as well as the body. Which of its faculties are free and able to cast off the tyranny of sin? Can this good desire arise first in the imagination? It cannot. The imaginations of the heart of the natural man are evil, and only evil, and that continually. Can it arise in the understanding? It cannot; for it is in darkness. When the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, and seek after God, he found none, no not

one—they were wise enough to do evil, but to do good they had no knowledge; neither had they a will to choose it: for the natural man follows the will of the flesh, which is always contrary to the will of God, and with the heart and affections he serves the law of sin.

Thus the dominion of sin is universal. It commands all the faculties of soul and body, which serve it with a willing and uninterrupted obedience; and from what has been said with respect to God, and with respect to ourselves, it is evident that the natural man is utterly unable to perform any holy obedience. This is the plain doctrine of scripture, and it is confirmed by our church in her 10th article, which declares, that "the "condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that "he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natur-"al strength and good works to faith and calling upon "God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, "pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of "God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a "good will, and working with us, when we have that "good will." Both the good will, and the power to work with it come from Christ; and the manner in which he bestows both upon us is thus described in scripture. God the Father accepts us as righteous through the merits of Jesus Christ, whereby we are justified; upon which we are united to Christ through faith given us by his holy Spirit; and from this union we receive continual supplies of grace to enable us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, which are well pleasing unto God the Father.

This vital union with Christ the head of the body is the principle of divine life in all his members, and it is expressed in scripture by various phrases, which denote the reality and absolute certainty of it, and which cannot admit of a metaphorical sense, such as, "Christ's "dwelling in us, and we in him, our being rooted and "planted into him, and built up in him, our being of "one spirit and one flesh with him, our living and be-"ing led by his Spirit." And it is also represented by

various images, such as the union between the head and the body, what a strange body would it be, which had only a metaphorical union with the head? Between the bread and the eater, what sort of a constitution must it be, which could live upon metaphorical bread? And between the foundation and the building, what kind of a building would it be, which should stand upon a metaphorical foundation? But chiefly between the vine and the branches, which our Lord has largely treated of in John xv. "I am the vine," says he, "ye are the "branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself "except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye "abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, "the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me "ye can do nothing." If any man abide in Christ, and bear much fruit to the glory of the Father, he must be as truly and as vitally united to Christ, as the branches are to the vine: for he is the root and stock, from whence the branches receive their nourishment, and are enabled to bring forth fruit: and therefore whoever is not united to Christ can have no principle of divine life in him, but is like a branch cut off from the stock and withered, whose end is to be burnt.

From these scriptures it is evident, that we cannot live to God, nor bring forth any fruit unto holiness until we are united to Christ, and have fellowship with him. The Spirit of God is the bond of ths union: for he gives us the true faith, whereby the soul is enabled to reject every thing that would separate it from Christ, and to cast away all hopes of salvation in its own endeavours and works, and thus placing no merit in any thing it can do, it closes in with the free offer of mercy in Christ Jesus, whom faith has a peculiar fitness to receive, and does actually receive him with all his fulness, as these scriptures testify, "For we have an "access," says the apostle, "and entrance by faith into "that grace of Christ, wherein we stand." And, again, "Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith." And that most holy faith, whereby Christ dwelleth in us, enables

us to live the life of Christ: for by purifying all the faculties of the soul it makes us to be like him, to love his image, and to desire it may be perfectly formed in our souls. And accordingly by the close and intimate union which faith keeps up between Christ and us, we are made conformable to his death and resurrection: for faith draws virtue from his death to destroy the dominion of sin, and from his resurrection to rise to newness of life. Nothing but the influence of the death of Christ, and a real fellowship with it, can free us from sin's dominion. We must be planted together in the likeness of his death, if we ever get any mortifying power over the body of sin. And we must be also planted into the likeness of his resurrection, that we, who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, may be quickened in Christ, and made alive in him. St. Paul had happy experience of this doctrine—"I am crucified, "says he, with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, "but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live "in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." And whoever is crucified with Christ in the same manner, has the body of sin destroyed, that henceforth he should not serve sin, and whoever liveth by the same faith in the Son of God, has continual supplies of grace from Jesus Christ to enable him to live a life of holiness unto God.

This is the scripture doctrine of holy obedience. We are therein taught that God must work in us what ever is well-pleasing to him. St. Paul prays thus for his Hebrews: "Now the God of peace make you per-"fect in every good work to do his will, working in you "that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus "Christ:" who came in the flesh to destroy in us ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we might be fit to perform holy obedience. "The great God and our "Saviour Jesus Christ, says he, gave himself for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify "unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good "works." And again another scripture saith——

"We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." When we are made new creatures in him, then have we a new nature with new affections, which delight to obey the will of God, as much as the old sinful nature hated it, for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. He is renewed throughout, in body, soul, and spirit. The body, which sin enslaved and defiled, is cleansed by the blood of Christ, and consecrated by his Spirit for an holy temple to the living God. The soul is enriched with the divine graces of faith, and hope, and love, which work upon all the faculties, restraining the imagination, enlightening the understanding, regulating the will, and turning the heart and affections to God; and then renewing the spirit day by day with the sweet and holy tempers of the blessed Jesus, that the whole man may grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Nothing availeth in Christ Jesus but this new creature. God the Father will accept of no obedience, unless it be the work of this new nature. Our best duties and services are displeasing to him, unless we be renewed by faith in the spirit of the mind, as our church has clearly determined in the 12th article. "Albeit that good "works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after "(don't go before) justification, cannot put away our "sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment, yet "are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, "and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, "insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evi-"dently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit."

From these authorities it is evident, that Jesus Christ is the foundation of all holy obedience. Until you be accepted in him, you can do no good works; nay, without him you can do nothing. The scripture and our articles and homilies speak full to this point, and they entirely overthrow the destructive doctrine of the Papists and Socinians, who agree in maintaining the merit of works. Every true son of our church has re-

nounced their heresies. The scripture has assured him; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord: but he finds the sinfulness of his nature reigning in many unholy tempers, and breaking out into many offences, against which he strives, but not in his own strength: for he is convinced, that his soul is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and that all his striving can no more give it spiritual life, than rubbing and chafing a dead carcase can restore to it animal life, and therefore he does not seek to attain holiness, while his nature continues corrupt and dead in sin. The gospel method is directly contrary. It first cleanses the heart, from whence are the issues of life, and then the streams will certainly run pure: It directs you to labour first to be reconciled unto God, that you may be accepted through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and justified by his merits, and then you will have a new nature inclined to holiness, and endued by the holy Spirit with power to seek and to attain it. After you have received justification to life, you may go on with the work of sanctification: for by justification your nature is regenerate and new-born, and sanctification is the proper work of this regenerate nature, as it brings all its parts and faculties into use, whereby they improve and grow in strength. Justification, which is the new birth of the soul is like the first birth of the infant into this world. When it is born, it has all the parts of the body perfect; no new ones are added afterwards, only these grow in size and strength, until they reach to the stature of a man, as the graces grow in the justified soul until it arrive to a perfect man in Christ. And then God, who has been glorified by it upon earth, will receive it into his eternal glory through Jesus Christ our Lord—

Who is the foundation of our present and eternal happiness, as I proposed in the fourth and last place to consider. This is a direct consequence from what has been said, and does not require many words to illustrate it: for since the sinner has no saving knowledge, until

Christ enlighten him; since God the Father will not accept his person, but through the righteousness of Christ, nor his works, but as done in Christ, and flowing from living faith in him, then it is certain that whatever happiness he enjoys must be derived from the Lord and giver of grace and glory. He can merit none, for when he has done all these things that are commanded him, which yet no man has done, he was even then to say, I am an unprofitable servant, I have done that which was my duty to do, and therefore I cannot deserve present, and much less eternal happiness from the hand of God.

By present happiness I mean those comforts of the gospel which I have been describing, and which the heavenly comforter administers to the sinner, when he is enlightened with saving truth, when he is convinced of his reconciliation with God the Father, and satisfied that the divine holiness, justice, and truth, are no longer his enemies, but will now make all things work together for his good; and when he is assured of the truth of his reconciliation, as well from the inward witness of the Spirit of God with his spirit, as from the holy obedience in which he now delights, and which he has power to perform. This happy soul enjoys the comforts of present salvation, which are daily strengthened in it more and more, as it grows in grace, and bears fairer and richer fruits of holiness: for this growth in grace is an evident proof of our acceptance with God, and a fruitful source of spiritual comfort: when we find ourselves renewed in the spirit of our minds, and are pleased with the will of God in the inner man, and are enabled to run cheerfully in the way of God's commandments, the happiness arising from hence can no more be described than the joys of heaven. If you would know what blessings, love, joy, peace, and the other fruits of the Spirit bring to the soul, O taste and see how gracious the Lord is. And whenever he gives you the experience of them, you will then find that in them heaven is already begun in the soul; and

if by believing we can rejoice at present with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, what must our joy be when we receive the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls. When Jesus Christ admits us into his kingdom, and bestows upon us all his spiritual blessings in heavenly places, what happiness we shall then feel, tongue cannot utter, nor can heart conceive. And inconceivably great though it be, yet it is all the "free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, "for "he hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his "Son:"—And faith is the hand by which we receive it: "for he that believeth on me, saith the blessed "Jesus, hath everlasting life." He purchased it for us. We could not attain it by any of our own works, nor could the highest angel in heaven merit it for one of the sons of men. It was bought for us by an inestimable price, by the obedience and sufferings of the God-man Christ Jesus, and he therefore obeyed and suffered, died and rose again, that we might be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. He acted as our representative, by which means we have an interest in all that he did and suffered. He resisted the tempter, obeyed the law, suffered the punishment due to the transgression of it, even unto death, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sat down on the throne of glory, as the head and representative of all the elect people of God. In all these things he acted as the head of the body the church; and we commonly say, a person is crowned, when the crown is put upon his head. Now our head is already crowned, and therefore so long as he possesses his glory, we his members shall possess ours, and shall share in the glories of our heavenly king. What these eternal glories are, it surpasseth all understanding to comprehend. The scripture has revealed them to us chiefly in negative descriptions. It removes from them that imperfection to which all sublunary good is subject. It calls them riches, but then they are not subject to rust and moth, nor can thieves break in to rob us of them. It compares them to an

inheritance, but then it is always in peace, no armies can lay it waste, no irregular passion can interrupt the happy enjoyment of it: and there can be no fear of losing it, because all tears are wiped away from every eye; and upon every head there is placed a crown of "glory, which is "incorruptible," has no principles of dissolution, and therefore no defect in it; is "undefil-"ed," has no stain of sin, or infirmity under it, and "fad-"eth not way," all human glory like a flower of the field withers and dies, but this is always flourishing, and blooms in never-fading spring. Thus the scripture removes every thing from our heavenly happiness, which renders our present enjoyments imperfect; and then to make the description full, puts eternity to it. And yet, even of this eternal happiness we have but faint ideas; we know it at present but in part. We shall know it better when our almighty Saviour bestows it upon us. When he admits us into his presence, receives us into his heaven, and places the never-fading crown of glory upon our heads, then we shall feel what an eternal weight of glory is. Then we shall enjoy that beatific vision, without which heaven would not be desirable, and we shall see the Lord Jesus face to face, and shall know that he is above all blessing and praise. We know indeed at present that he is God over all blessed for ever, but the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind, so that our knowledge and our praises are imperfect. But then we shall be free from this earthly clog, and shall see more of his excellencies, and shall be more able to praise them. We shall continually find new beauties, new worlds of delight in him; for his perfections being infinite, will afford us fresh subject of praise to eternity. And our interest in them being an act of his free grace, will render them to us more precious, and the completion of them more sweet. Every new day of glory (if I may so speak, when time is no more) will bring us more in debt to his free grace. The holding of glory shall be free grace without end;

so that Christ's relation of creditor, and ours of debtor, shall grow and be greater for ever. Redeemed sinners can never say, Now our tribute of praise to Jesus is fully paid, because they will be always contracting new debts, and while they stand confirmed in bliss, the more broken debtors will they be. The longer they enjoy the glory of heaven through millions of ages, the debt to the Lamb that purchased it for them by his blood will grow infinitely. Praises to eternity can take nothing from the debt; for the debt increases, while they are praising. And let the innumerable company of angels join the spirits of just men made perfect: let them raise their hearts and voices to the highest strains of praise, they would still fall short of the greatness of his merits. O holy Spirit! now give us a heart and a tongue to join our imperfect praises with theirs. With them we ascribe salvation to the Lord God omnipotent. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.

I shall here finish the doctrinal parts of this discourse, but I cannot conclude without making a short application. Every useful doctrine may be reduced to practice: and all the Christian doctrines have a direct tendency to operate in our lives, and to produce their proper effects in our conversations. We have been considering some of the excellencies of God our Saviour, which are not mere speculative points; because he was made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. He is our all-wise prophet to enlighten the blindness of our understanding, and to teach us saving knowledge. He is our all-meritorious priest, through the merits of whose perfect sacrifice the pollution and the guilt of our sins are taken away, and we are accepted as righteous before God the Father. And he is our almighty king, by whose grace the dominion of sin is destroyed in us, and we are enabled to perform an holy obedience. "Jesus Christ is all and "in all: for we are complete in him." Salvation from first to last, from the first ray of light which broke into

our dark and sinful souls, until we see Christ in the fulness of glory, is all his work, and to him must the honour of it be ascribed. He is the foundation on whom it all stands: for "other foundation can no man "lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Men, brethren, and fathers, suffer the word of exhortation. You profess, that Jesus Christ is the foundation of all saving knowledge: do you then seek it from him in the study of his holy word, and through the blessing of his good Spirit upon your studies? or are any of you seeking it from the unscriptural unnatural light of nature, from that nature which is totally dark and blind, until the abstracted metaphysician has stolen some great truths from the revealed word, and then boasts that he was self-enlightened, and that they were self-irradiated upon his own mind by a more mysterious and enthusiastic light than the maddest Quaker ever pretended to. In their metaphysical reveries, let them talk of their light of nature; yet if God may be heard, nature is in darkness. It is blind in the things of God; nay more, until it be renewed, it cannot see and know them. To whom then would you go for the knowledge of them? To Christ, as held forth in his word, and applied by his Spirit, or rather to human learning and its arts and sciences? God forbid. They have not one ray of their own to give. Their boasted lustre is but a borrowed light. Blot the sun out of heaven and these bright stars are at once in the blackness of darkness: for there is but one created sun to enlighten this material world, as there is but one uncreated Sun to enlighten the spiritual world here in grace, and for ever in glory. When the arts and sciences keep their proper station, reflecting the light cast upon them by the sun of righteousness, then the study of them is sanctified, and they are highly useful in the school of Christ, but unsanctified, they only tend to puff up and to feed the pride of corrupt nature. Let this be an answer to the adversary, who may object, that I am a decrier of human learning. When

it is preferred to divine, I do decry it, but in no other respect. Am I an enemy to light because I prefer the all-reviving light of the sun to the faint glimmering light of the stars? Christ is the sun of righteousness, the light of the spiritual world. Let it then be your first and principal study to attain from him divine learning, and in subordination to it seek human learning. Let God be your teacher in things of God. Read his word, as he who was wiser than his teachers did, day and night; but read it with humility, and always begin with the excellent prayer before mentioned, "Lord open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous "things in thy law:" the Lord will open them, and you will not only see spiritual truths clearly, but will also be more diligent in the study of useful knowledge, and will attain more of it, than a man of the best parts, trusting to the mere strength of genius, can ever attain. And one great truth the word and the Spirit of God will certainly manifest to you, and that is,

Secondly, The manner of your acceptance. To a sinner convinced of the corruption of his nature, and of the transgressions of his life, nothing can be more interesting than to know, whether God's justice, and holiness, and truth can pardon him. The fancied light of fallen nature cannot teach him this. It never did. It never led one learned heathen, Greek, or Roman, to Jesus Christ. It never can: because it is blind, and with the aid of all the sciences, blind it remains, until Christ by his word and Spirit open its eyes. Then it sees, that his righteousness imputed to it by faith is the only method of being accepted as righteous before God the Father. Are you then seeking to be accepted in the righteousness of the Beloved? Or are you trying to work out some righteousness of your own, which altogether or in part may render you accepted? It must never be forgotten, that justification by faith only is the grand Protestant doctrine. Justification by works is downright Popery. We separated from the Bishop of Rome, because he set up the merit of works in opposi-

tion to the righteousness of God. And lo! Protestant divines have fallen back again into the sink of Popery, maintaining the merit of works: as every man must do, who talks of the dignity and rectitude of human nature, of the dignity of sinful nature, and of the rectitude of fallen nature, of natural religion, of the moral sense, and of the moral scheme, and of the fitness and relation of things: for these systems are big with contradictions, unless man be able of himself to discover and to practise such duties as will render him acceptable to God. And indeed, metaphysical writers have ascribed to blind fallen nature both this will and power, maintaining that "every one may find within himself "the rule of right, and obligations to follow it." Bishop Butler's Sermons, p. 82. But what saith the scripture? Positively and expressly it speaks of man's having neither will nor power, unless they be given him of God. Being sinful in heart and life he lies under sentence of condemnation by the just law of heaven, and like an attainted rebel he cannot do a legal act, until he be pardoned. Jesus Christ is the foundation of this pardon; and until we are accepted through his righteousness, our best works have in them the nature of sin. This is scripture, and the doctrine of our church. And can you believe a man to be a friend to either, who wants to establish the merit of works? Can he be a sound Protestant, or a good church of England man? No, he cannot. Certainly, my brethren, you would condemn him with one voice. Away then with all the metaphysical rubbish, which has long obscured the scripture doctrine of acceptance; for the love of the Lord Jesus, and of his flock for whom he shed his blood, let us hear no more of the religion of nature—of that religion which finds us and leaves us children of wrath: for the sake of your own present and eternal peace let all metaphysical systems of the religion of nature be no more your favourite studies. You have the holy scripture in your hands; whither would you go, but to it for the words of eternal life? And does it not

teach you that Jesus Christ came into the world to redeem us from the miseries of our fallen nature? And whose cause then are these men defending, who want to establish a religion founded on that nature, from which Christ came to redeem us? Good God! what an attempt is this, for Christian men, Christian ministers, ambassadors of Jesus Christ, not only to preach up the religion of nature, as if nature was not fallen, but also to make this religion of nature the foundation of revealed. What a monstrous paradox is this, natural religion the foundation of revealed? Is not this taking away Jesus Christ the sure foundation, which God hath laid, and putting the religion of nature under him as a foundation to bear him up, and thus trying to lay another foundation, which if God be true no man can lay. The folly, the guilt, and the danger of this proceeding are so evident upon the principles before laid down, that I shall not urge the matter farther at present, only if there be here any admirers of this metaphysical and unnatural religion, it may be useful to them to consider, what this religion can do for them, even as they understand it, which the religion of the Bible has not promised to do for them in a more full and ample manner, especially with respect to their performing an holy obedience, of which Jesus Christ is the sole foundation, which is the third inference from what has been said.

Until you are accepted in Christ you cannot do any good works: because your whole nature is corrupt, and nothing but corrupt fruit can grow upon it. Are you then seeking for an holy nature, that in it you may perform an holy obedience? Are you then praying to God to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that his will may become yours, his word your study and delight, his Spirit your guide? And is it the desire of your soul, that you may be enabled to run cheerfully in the way of God's commandments unto the end? Is Christ the foundation of this great work? And are you

convinced you want grace from him every moment to carry it on? Then bring this conviction into practice. Let it operate in your lives. Where would you seek his grace, but in the means of grace? And when your persons are accepted through the righteousness of Christ imputed to you by faith, then God will accept your attendance upon these means, but not before. Then he will be found of you in them, will give his blessing to the use of them, and will enable you to abound in every good word and work to the praise of his glory. The scripture is express, that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. We can bear no fruit until we be grafted into him the true vine. Our church is exceeding clear upon this head. To their authorities we must submit, and we shall find the happy effects of embracing them, if they dispose us to seek, until God gives us a new nature with new faculties and affections, and enables us to bring forth much fruit to the praise of the glory of his free grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: for then we shall find the present comforts of the gospel sweetly drawing us on in the way of duty, until we be at last presented perfect in Christ Jesus. Perfect and complete in him, but not in our own righteousness, we shall be presented before God the Father without spot of sin to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.

To these truths every Christian assents. He lays no other foundation for his present and eternal happiness than Jesus Christ, and he is a sure foundation: for he is the author and finisher of the faith, the author to begin it here in grace, the finisher to end it, when faith shall be swallowed up in vision. As he is the author of all the works of creation, so he is the author of all the works of redemption, by whom they begin, through whom they are carried on, and in whom they will be completed: "For I am Alpha and Omega, "says he, the first and the last, which was, which is,

"and which is to come, the Almighty." He is the Lord God omnipotent, by whom all things were made; by his over-ruling providence they are supported: for he upholdeth all things by the word of his power. He is the most blessed God and Saviour in the offices of a prophet to enlighten our blind eyes, and to be our wisdom, of a priest to atone for the pollution and the guilt of our sins, and to be our righteousness, and of a king to destroy in us the dominion of sin, and to be our sanctification. And he is God the Sovereign Judge, before whose awful tribunal we must all soon appear. View Jesus Christ in these exalted stations, where he sits far above all principalities and powers, as the first and the last in the works of creation, providence, redemption, and final judgment, and then see whether you can exalt him high enough. Is not this almighty God and King far above all blessing and praise? You cannot sufficiently extol the works of creation. Survey them with a philosopher's eye, and they will appear great and wonderful in wisdom and power, affording an unexhausted subject of praise. And how then shall we be able to magnify their Maker, who is great above all his works? Especially great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God almighty, in the redemption of a sinful world: For when you glorify the Lord Jesus for this inestimable mercy, exalt him as much as you can, for even yet will he far exceed, and when you exalt him, put forth all your strength and be not weary: for you can never go far enough. How should we upon earth go far enough, when the glorified spirits, who try to exalt him as much as they are able, yet fall short? He will always, to eternity he will, be above all blessing and praise. The thousands, thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, who are now standing round his throne, admiring his perfections, and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, when they put forth all their strength and are not weary, still they can never go far enough. And when all the sons of God who shouted for joy at

the first creation, shall again join their voices upon the number of the elect being perfected, still he will far exceed their most exalted song. Angels and men with their highest strains of praise cannot come up to the greatness of our Lord's merit. Let the heavenly song be continued through millions of ages, yet the God whom they celebrate is infinite, and their praise therefore must fall short of the subject. The perfection of the almighty Creator, and the love of the all-merciful Redeemer, are, to the redeemed of the Lord, subjects which eternity cannot exhaust. O that it may be your happiness and mine to lay Jesus Christ and him only, for the foundation of all saving knowledge, of all acceptance with the Father, and of all holy obedience, that having spent our time here by the strength of his grace in his service and to his glory, we may be admitted to see his perfections, and to be happy in the enjoyment of them, and may join our grateful hearts and voices with the blessed company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, in singing the eternal hymn of thanks and praise. So be it Lord Jesus, to the honour of the Father, and to the glory of the eternal Spirit, three persons in one Jehovah, whom the church militant now worships, and the church triumphant praises for ever and ever. *Amen.*

In a Treatise, entitled, The Flower of Godly Prayers, *written by the Rev. Mr. Thomas Becon, and printed in the year* 1563, *there is*

A PRAYER FOR FAITH,

Which breathes the very Spirit of the Apostles' Doctrine, and which I lay before the reader, that he may pray for the comforts of it in the devout words of this holy man.

WE are taught by thy holy apostle, O most loving Saviour, that whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and that it is impossible to please thee without faith. And therefore they that come unto thee must believe that thou art God, yea and such a God as is both able and will also abundantly reward all them that with true faith seek thee. For thy eyes, O Lord, look upon faith, and thou dost appear and shew thyself unto them that have faith in thee: yea, through faith, thou being the King of glory, art married to the souls of the faithful, and makest them partakers of thy divine nature, through the wonderful working of thy blessed Spirit. Through faith so many as believe are justified, made the sons and heirs of God, and have everlasting life. By faith we obtain of God all good things, even whatsoever we ask in thy name. Seeing that faith is so precious a jewel in thy sight, that without it nothing is acceptable unto thy divine majesty; and we of our own nature cannot have this most singular treasure except thou givest it unto us from above, and dost breathe it into our hearts by thy holy Spirit: for we of ourselves are blind, ignorant, fool-

ish, and by no means can perceive the things that pertain to the Spirit of God, we most heartily beseech thee to take away from us all infidelity and unfaithfulness, which we received of old Adam, and to plant in us true faith and undoubted belief, that we may be thoroughly persuaded that thou art the Son of the living God, very God and very man, our alone sweet-smelling sacrifice, our alone Mediator, advocate, and intercessor, our alone wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, by whom alone, and for whose sake only, thy heavenly Father is well pleased with us, our sins are remitted, grace and everlasting life are freely given unto us. O Lord God, suffer us not to lean to our own wisdom, nor to believe, as blind flesh fancieth, nor to seek salvation where superstition dreameth; but let our faith only be grounded on thy word, and give us grace truly to believe in thee with all our heart, to put our trust in thee, to look for all good things of thee, to call upon thy blessed name in adversity, and with joyful voices and more merry hearts, to praise and magnify it in prosperity. Suffer us not to doubt neither of God thy heavenly Father, nor of thee, God his Son, nor of God the Holy Ghost, but earnestly to believe that you being the distinct persons in the Deity, are notwithstanding, one very God, besides whom, there is no God, neither in heaven nor in earth. Grant also, that we may assuredly believe whatsoever is contained in the holy scriptures, and by no means suffer ourselves to be plucked from the verity thereof, but manly and stedfastly abide in the same, even unto death, rage world, roar devil. And this faith, O sweet Jesus, increase thou daily in us more and more, that at the last, through thy goodness, we may be made perfect and strong men in thy holy religion, and shew ourselves both before thee and the world truly faithful, by bringing forth plenty of good works unto the glory and honour of thy name: which with God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest true God, worlds without end. *Amen.*

JEPHTHAH'S VOW FULFILLED,

AND

HIS DAUGHTER NOT SACRIFICED;

PROVED IN

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY, AT ST. MARY'S, IN OXFORD.

JEPHTHAH'S VOW FULFILLED.

JUDGES xi. 30, 31.

And Jephthah *vowed a Vow unto the Lord and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of* Ammon *into mine hands,*
Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, *shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-Offering.*

THIS vow has been the subject of much ridicule; it has been represented, as rashly made and immorally executed, and the scripture itself has suffered through the character of Jephthah: the vindication of it also has been attended with so many difficulties, that an attempt to remove them must be of service to religion; and this I shall at present undertake. I shall endeavour to free it from the false interpretations which have been put upon it, and from the objections which have been made against it. But it is not the whole history I shall treat in this manner: that would be too extensive a design for a single discourse. The principal point alone shall be now considered, namely, Jephthah's fulfilling his vow, which I purpose to shew he might, and did fulfil, without sacrificing his daughter.

The history has been generally understood in this sense: when the men of Gilead had placed Jephthah at their head, in order to deliver them from the children of Ammon; he gathered together his army, and before he begun the battle he vowed a vow unto the Lord, and promised, that if God would prosper him, he would sacrifice whatever should first meet him on his return. Upon this he begins the attack, and the Lord delivered the Ammonites into his hands, so that he slew them with very great slaughter. By this success he became obliged to a strict observance of his vow; and it unfortunately so happened, that as he was returning to his house in peace, his only daughter, not knowing of his vow, came out with joy to meet him. Hereby she became, according to his vow, the person to be sacrificed, and he did offer her up for a burnt-offering.

This is the common interpretation of Jephthah's vow. It has generally been supposed that his daughter was sacrificed. An action so contrary to the laws of God and man, and so inconsistent with the good character which St. Paul has given of Jephthah's faith, that it is not easy to conceive, how it came to pass, that such an opinion was ever entertained at all, much less how it became so general; especially as no historical passage of scripture has laid more open to the wanton jests of the infidel, or is more difficult to be explained by the sober believer. From these difficulties which the history now labours under, I trust, I shall be able to free it by shewing,

I. That the opinion of her being sacrificed is exposed to so many solid objections, that it is not defensible, and

II. By proving from the history itself, that she was not sacrificed.

I. And the first objection against the history's being explained in the common manner is this, that Jephthah could not have sacrificed his daughter, though he had vowed to do it; because human sacrifices were abso-

lutely forbidden by the law of MOSES. And Jephthah knew this: he did not only live in obedience to the law, but was also at that time the judge of it. And would he act contrary to his knowledge? Could he live in obedience to the law, and yet dispense with the breach of one duty, which Moses had made indispensable? Or what an unjust judge would he be, who should undertake to punish the offences of others, while he himself was a most notorious offender? These circumstances, indeed, prove, rather that he ought not to have done it, than that he did it not. But,

2. When we consider further, that the same Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah at the making his vow, as was upon Moses at the writing of the law; this clearly proves that he did it not: for the Spirit of the Lord could not give one law by Moses, and another opposite to it by Jephthah——he could not, whilst the first was still in force, direct any person to transgress it——the infallible Spirit of God cannot contradict himself——nor can human sacrifices be both lawful and unlawful at the same time—so that if the same Spirit, which spake in Moses, directed Jephthah (as the text expressly says he did) in making his vow; then no doubt he did not sacrifice his daughter: But,

3. Further, supposing he had offered her up, and pretended to be directed by the Spirit of God, yet how came it to pass that he was never punished? To offer human sacrifices was made a capital crime by the law, and yet it is not so much as hinted, that he suffered death for what he did; nay, where does it appear that he was ever called to an account for it? And yet there was something so particular in the offence, in the person of the offender, and in the time when he offended, that then the Jewish state ought not to have over-looked it; and God, who then presided over it, was in equity bound not to spare such an offender. And if Jephthah under these circumstances was not punished, it is at least probable, that he did not deserve punishment,

which yet he must have deserved, if he had sacrificed his daughter. And,

4. These circumstances are further confirmed from the nature of the action, which was certainly immoral, and such therefore as Jephthah did not. There is nothing in which the general sense of mankind is more agreed, than that every man's life is his own property; This general sense arises from the natural principle of self-preservation, it comes confirmed to us by the laws of all free nations, and is further strengthened by the laws of God: And that action which should break through all these laws must be immoral. But though the action be immoral, yet perhaps it may be said, was Jephthah such a man as would not do an immoral action? St. Paul has here provided us with an answer which fully clears up the character of Jephthah in this particular: for the most considerable circumstance in the life of this eminent judge, was the history before us: this was the most material action recorded of him in scripture, and which placed his character in the most conspicuous light. Now St. Paul could not form a judgment of his life and character without considering this his principal transaction; and in the 11th chapter to the Hebrews, where he is celebrating the praises of those ancient worthies, who did such great and excellent acts through faith, among others he mentions Jephthah, and the time, he says, would fail, if he should set about praising him, and the other worthies, as they deserved. Such a commendation from an apostle was the highest honour which could be conferred: for praise is ever judged of according to those who give it, and that is the greatest praise which is given by them, who are themselves the most praise-worthy. What an high honour then was it to be commended by a St. Paul! certainly there could be nothing immoral in the character of Jephthah whom he thus commended, and yet the principal point of view in which St. Paul considered him, that indeed which gives us the strongest proof of his faith, was the making his vow; which if

he had fulfilled by sacrificing his daughter, it must be confessed was an immoral action. And therefore if Jephthah could not sacrifice his daughter without breaking through all those morals laws of God and man, which say, "Thou shalt not kill;" and if St. Paul when he considered him in this light, could not have recommended him had the action been immoral, then it is evident, that Jephthah did nothing immoral in fulfilling his vow, and consequently did not sacrifice his daughter. And,

5. Besides, when he made his vow, he promised to fulfil it upon condition, that God would prosper him in the undertaking he had in hand; and can it be supposed but that Jephthah would word his vow with so much caution, as not to be obliged by it to do an immoral action? There are still extant proofs enow of his great abilities as well as faith, which clearly evince, that he was far from being either rash or weak, and yet he must have been both to a very great degree, if he could first have vowed to sacrifice his daughter, or afterwards thought himself obliged to do it, because God had given him success: in either of these respects he must have acted out of character; in the first, without his usual prudence, for which he is recommended; in the latter without his faith, for which he is celebrated. But still,

6. Whatever Jephthah was, yet God is perfect; and how shall we vindicate the divine perfections, if he gave success to those means, which led directly to an immoral end? The Spirit of God was upon Jephthah, when he made his vow—the hand of God enabled him to succeed—and it was this success which obliged him to perform his vow. In these instances he was certainly under the divine guidance. And was it of God that he vowed to sacrifice his daughter, or could God in any sense be the means of such a sacrifice? These things cannot be. Far be such proceedings from the All-perfect. His goodness, justice, veracity, nay, every divine attribute forbid us to think of it. So that if the perfections of God will not suffer him to countenance an

immoral action, and if he did countenance Jephthah's vow by assisting him with his holy Spirit, and by giving him success, then certainly the thing he vowed was not immoral, and of course he did not sacrifice his daughter.

Out of many more objections that might be urged, let these suffice at present, as it fully appears from them, that the account commonly given is not rational, is inconsistent with the truth of scripture, and contrary to the history itself. Let us then seek out for some other explanation, which may be fairly deduced from the words themselves; may be agreeable to the reason of the thing, and consistent with the good character St. Paul hath given us of Jephthah; and such an interpretation I shall first lay down, and afterwards endeavour to establish, in order to

II. Prove from the history itself, that he did not sacrifice his daughter.

The matter of fact was this: when the children of Israel were in great distress by the invasion of the Ammonites, and had no captain who might lead them out to battle, the Lord raised up Jephthah to be their deliverer; and, as it was common in such cases during the æra of the judges, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him to enable him to execute his office. And when he entered upon it, he made a vow unto the Lord, "that "upon condition of success, whatever should meet him "at his doors when he returned in peace, should "EITHER be the Lord's, OR offered up for a burnt-"offering." This was the vow! and if it consists of two distinct sentences, as I shall presently shew it does, then Jephthah will be found to have worded it with so much caution, that he lay under no obligation to sacrifice his daughter. When he returned and met his only child, the history represents him under great perplexity; but this did not arise from his concern to offer her up: there were other reasons. The text itself tells us, that it was losing all hopes of descendants, losing the inheritance, which in default of heirs went to the nearest

kinsman, and many other privileges which then subsisted among the Jews, but have now ceased among us, that occasioned his grief: for we find, "that she went "with her companions, and bewailed her virginity up "on the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of "two months that she returned unto her father, who "did with her ACCORDING TO HIS VOW "WHICH HE HAD VOWED;" i. e. according to the FIRST PART of the vow, he dedicated her unto the Lord, and in consequence of such dedication she continued the remainder of her life a virgin: for, AFTER the vow had been fulfilled, the text observes—"She knew no man." Hereby the purpose of the vow was answered; from the time that she was dedicated unto the Lord, she continued to the end of her days in an unmarried state: because as the vow happened to fall upon her while she was in that state, she could not change it without causing her father to break his vow. This was the fact: whether it can be justified or not, is another question, which no ways concerns my present argument. It is sufficient for my purpose, that the text clearly asserts, she was, according to the words of the vow, to be dedicated to the Lord—was dedicated—at the time of dedication was a virgin—continued so some years afterwards—and therefore continued so till her death.

This was, indeed, a singular case: the design of it was so uncommon, the reasons to justify it so extraordinary, that no precedents can be drawn from hence for recluses of any kind; it might easily be shewn to be a confutation rather of such practices, if that were within the design of my present argument. But I wave this, and proceed to observe, that it was in her so remarkable an instance of filial piety, so evident a proof of her public-spiritedness, and love of her country; and these virtues were in her so eminent, in her condition so illustrious, that the nation, in gratitude to her, made it a law, so long as she lived, "for the daughters of "Israel to go yearly to MAKE PRESENTS to the

"daughter of Jephthah, four days in the year." And here certainly I need not point out the absurdity of going year after year to make presents to a dead person, though the propriety of making them to one in her state must be manifest to every one.

This is the true interpretation of the history; and it is free from all the objections to which the common opinion is exposed. It only remains, that I support it by sound arguments; and the following, I trust, will appear to every one satisfactory. And,

1. The first is taken from the history not mentioning her being sacrificed; and when the history is thus silent, from whence can it be proved that she was sacrificed? If there be any proof, it must be either in the words of the vow, or in the fulfilling it; but there is no proof in them: for there is nothing more said in the latter, than that "he did with her ACCORDING TO "HIS VOW."—So that here we are referred to the words of the vow, to know what it was he did with her; and all that Jephthah vowed was—"If the Lord would "give him success, whatever met him on his return in "peace, should EITHER be the Lord's, OR he would "offer it up for a burnt-offering." Here it is plain what he promised in these words consists of two parts: for what met him and was to be dedicated to the Lord, was one thing; but what met him and was to be sacrificed, was another: and it is certain these two things are distinct. Though every thing sacrificed was dedicated to the Lord, yet every thing dedicated to the Lord was not sacrificed. The incense—aromatics—vestments—and all the apparatus of the temple were dedicated to the Lord; but yet none of them were sacrificed. The vow then consists of two senses, which mean two different things, and which do not follow in consequence—whatever meets me shall be the Lord's, "AND I will sacrifice it:" but the true construction is, "It shall be the Lord's, OR I will sacrifice it;" for the particle used in the original, has the sense of OR, and the translators have so often rendered it thus, and

have mentioned it even here in the margin of the bible, that no one can object to its being so interpreted in this place, where the whole history fixes it to this sense. As the vow then consists of two distinct parts, it would be kept by observing either of them—and as one thing Jephthah promised mentions nothing about sacrificing his daughter—and as when he fulfilled what he had promised, it is only said, "he did with her according to "his vow," then it is evident that the history is quite silent about her being sacrificed; which as clearly proves, as any negative argument can, that she was not sacrificed. But,

2. This is still further evident from hence, that though Jephthah had vowed to sacrifice whatever creature should first meet him, yet if a creature had met him which the law forbad to be offered up, it is certain he could not have offered it; and how then could he his daughter? If an unclean creature had first met him, would he have thought himself obliged by his vow to offer it up, when God had forbidden it? Certainly he would not. No vow can lay a man under any obligation to transgress the laws of God.

What then was to be done in this case? The law itself had provided a remedy. As the unclean creature could not be sacrificed, it was to be ransomed, and another allowed of for sacrifice was to be offered up in its stead: and why ought not this rule to take place in the case of Jephthah? The same law, which forbad offering up an unclean creature, forbad human sacrifices. If a vow should fall upon an unclean creature, it was to be ransomed—if it should fall upon an human creature, it was also to be ransomed—and God promised to accept of one in place of the other. As I lay great stress upon this argument, and would have it carefully considered, I must refer to the 27th chapter of Leviticus, where this point is fully treated of. Now Jephthah must have read this chapter. He could not but know that this was the rule prescribed in the law of Moses, and therefore though he had vowed to sacrifice what-

ever creature should first meet him, yet he was not obliged by this vow to sacrifice his daughter; because by the law she was to be ransomed: and this eminent judge could not be ignorant, that it was lawful to ransom her, and absolutely unlawful not to do it. So that, put the case either way, the point is clear: either her father did include her in his vow, or he did not—If he did, then she was to be ransomed—and if he did not, then she could not be sacrificed. And therefore this is another strong negative argument that she was not made a burnt-offering. But

3. The evidence does not rest here. There are other arguments, which clearly prove that she was alive after her father had fulfilled his vow, and therefore of course she could not be sacrificed: for the sacred historian observes, as a consequence of the vow's being fulfilled—as what followed upon her entering into it, that she continued a virgin all the rest of her life—"Her father "did with her according to his vow: AND SHE "KNEW NO MAN." But when? After she was sacrificed? No. This remark would have been absurd, when she was dead; whereas being a description of her after the vow was fulfilled, it must describe some state or condition she was in, even after the completion of the vow and in consequence of it—and this was her being or continuing afterwards a virgin: Jephthah, as I before observed, was not obliged by his vow to sacrifice her—his vow would be kept by dedicating her to the Lord—he did dedicate her—after she was dedicated, the sacred historian remarks, that she remained a virgin—can any thing be more plain or self-evident, than that she, who remained a virgin, was also alive? Could she with any propriety be said to be the one without being the other? Nay, if he had written purposely to prove her alive, could he have brought any stronger proof than this——"That from the day of her "dedication she continued a virgin." This therefore, I look upon as a positive argument, taken from the history itself, for her not having been sacrificed. But

4. The history proceeds further, and asserts that she was alive at least some years after the vow was fulfilled. The words are—"And it was a LAW in Israel, that "the daughters of Israel went yearly (to lament as it "is rendered, or as it is in the original) to MAKE PRE-"SENTS to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite "four days in a year." How the translators happened to mistake this passage, is not easily to be conceived: for the word, which they here render lament, and which signifies to make presents, they have given the true idea of, in every passage but this and another. They have translated it by these three words, reward, hire, gift. The use of it is very remarkable in the lxviiith Psalm, 18th verse; "Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led "captivity captive, thou hast received GIFTS for "men." Here they have rendered the same word GIFTS: which they have in the passage above made to signify lament. And gifts it does signify—I have their own usage and authority to say it does—and, what is more, the authority of all the Lexicographers. To make presents is, therefore, the meaning of it in this place, and when these presents were made to her, she could not be dead. When the daughters of Israel went according to the laws of the land four days in the year to visit her, she must be alive. She was a recluse dedicated—therefore alive. The nature of the presents, which they carried, shew that she was alive. The intention of making them, proves as much. So does the setting apart four days in a year to make them. The very thing speaks itself—she received these presents—therefore was not dead: and besides, by the law of Moses it was a crime to make them to the dead. And further, it was provided by a law, that these presents should be made her yearly—but this law was contrary to the law of Moses, if she had been dead: and yet no censure is passed upon it—therefore she was living. And when these circumstances are considered together, what further evidence would any person require than this? That she could not be dead, who was

visited four days in every year by the daughters of Israel, and had then such presents made her, as none could receive, but one, who was living.

5. And what greatly strengthens all these arguments, what demonstrates that she was alive long after the vow was fulfilled, is a proof taken from the sacred historian's observing, "that she RECEIVED these presents. "Four days in every year the daughters of Israel made "their presents TO the daughter of Jephthah"—they made them for HER USE AND BENEFIT: the particle used in the original does not only denote the dative case TO—TO the daughter of Jephthah; but frequently expresses something further. When spoken of two things, where one is said to act upon the other, it denotes, that one was the cause of the other, and produced whatever action or condition the writer was then treating of; in this sense it is most elegantly used in the first chapter of Genesis. When spoken of persons, where one is doing something to another, it often denotes that one did the action for the use and benefit of the other. This is a well-known idiom of the sacred tongue; and the literal sense of the word, as well as the scope of the history, require that in the passage before us it should be thus understood. The phrase therefore expresses that the daughters of Israel made their presents "for the use and benefit of Jephthah's "daughter." For the use of one who was sacrificed? For the benefit of one who was dead? Could this possibly be? Certainly there can be no greater absurdity. The dead are out of the reach of our good offices: but she shared in them—presents were made TO her, therefore she must have received them—they were made for her use and benefit, therefore she was sensible of them.—She received them and was sensible of them for some years after the vow was fulfilled, therefore was for some years after alive, and of course was not sacrificed. If this argument required any thing to add to its clearness and conviction, I might support it by other authorities; but it seems to me undeniably

conclusive. I shall only mention by way of illustration two historical passages of heathen writers, in the grand lineaments of which there is so great a resemblance of the present history, that I doubt not they took their origin from hence: I mean the vows of Agamemnon and Idomeneus. Their cases were almost the same as Jephthah's. A parallel might easily be drawn between them to shew this; and if it could be proved (with some degree of probability I think it might) that both of them took their rise from his history, it would strengthen the interpretation I have now given of it: because if these were borrowed from it, and tradition had preserved perfect the chief marks of likeness, this would be a probable reason that Jephthah's daughter was not sacrificed. Neither of their daughters were offered up, though they were in parallel circumstances with his, and it is likely the tradition of her being saved was the foundation of their histories being so represented. And,

What tends strongly to confirm the opinion, that these histories were derived from Jephthah's vow, is an instance of the same sort of presents being offered to certain recluses in the heathen world: and it will be very difficult to assign any satisfactory reasons for the origin of such a ceremony, unless we trace it up to the days of Jephthah. It was in all appearance a corruption of his history. Men retained the knowledge of the fact, after they had forgot the reasons upon which he acted, and this led them to ingraft upon it numerous errors. The practice of dedicating recluses without any obligation or necessity, must, I think, have had its original from hence. It took its rise from a gross mistake of this history. It could not come into the heathen world from reason—it was unreasonable; nor from nature—it was unnatural: there must have been some authority which at first seemed to countenance such a practice; and by length of time, and the corruptions of mankind, the case of Jephthah might be so much mistaken, as to be made a precedent for that very error, of which it is a

most clear confutation. Now if this custom among the heathens came from Jephthah, it will greatly establish the interpretation of the text. This it will prove at least, that they who are dedicated, were not sacrificed; and that they who received certain presents by virtue of such dedication, were indisputably alive. The Heathens made the same presents to their recluses, as the daughters of Israel did in the case before us. This is abundantly evident from their own writers. And for what reason should they thus agree in this ceremony, unless it had been derived from one common cause? And so far as this is probable, it must be admitted, that if the heathens offered these presents to none but them who were alive, then she who received the same presents was also alive.

I might have been more copious upon these arguments, but they seemed to me so plain and conclusive, that they needed not be further insisted on: and now the case hath been fairly stated, I leave it to every impartial man to determine on which side the truth prevails. The common received opinion is, that Jephthah, according to his vow, sacrificed his daughter, but this opinion I shewed was not defensible: because human sacrifices were forbidden by the law of Moses, and Jephthah did not transgress this law: for he was directed by the Spirit of God in making his vow—he was never punished for it—he is commended for it by St. Paul—and had success in consequence of it. And if the common opinion cannot be supported against these objections, much less against the arguments brought to prove that she was not sacrificed—the historian has neither included her in the vow, nor in the fulfilling it—and if she had been included, the law had provided a ransom, whereby the vow would be kept, and she not made a burnt-offering. From these negative arguments I endeavoured to establish the true interpretation, which was settled beyond all doubt from certain passages in the history, which gave her the attributes of a living person some years after her father

had fulfilled his vow: and I think no truth can be more evident than this, that she could not be sacrificed and dead, who still had the attributes of a living person.

Thus is the character of Jephthah vindicated, and neither rashness nor immorality entered into the making of his vow, or the fulfilling of it: but this eminent judge appears to be distinguished for his faith and other virtues. The scripture also is cleared in this particular, and reconciled to reason and common sense; and this historical passage was recorded, as all scripture was, that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

THE

PARABLE OF THE DRY BONES;

INTERPRETED IN A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

ST. OLAVE'S, SOUTHWARK,

OCTOBER 24th, 1756,

PUBLISHED

AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHURCHWARDENS AND OF A GREAT PART OF THE CONGREGATION.

And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses.—Col. ii. 13.

---

x 6

TO THE

CHURCHWARDENS AND PARISHIONERS

OF

ST. OLAVE'S,

THIS PLAIN

DISCOURSE,

MADE PUBLIC AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT IN CHRIST,

WILLIAM ROMAINE.

THE

PARABLE OF THE DRY BONES.

EZEK. xxxvii. 4.

O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

ALL our ideas of spiritual objects are comparative, taken from matter, and carried up to spirit. In our present state we have no knowledge but what is first sensible, but what comes into the mind from some of the senses, and is borrowed from objects upon which they can make their observation. This is at present a received truth among the learned. Happy for us, that it is received, because scripture knowledge is conveyed in this manner. God accomodates his instruction to our capacities: he makes use of outward and sensible objects to explain inward and spiritual: he applies the book of nature to illustrate the book of grace, thus bringing heavenly things down to the level of our understandings, and setting them (as it were) before our eyes by their natural pictures and just similitudes.

The very language of the Old Testament is of this nature. Every word stands for some sensible object, and from thence raises the idea of some correspondent spiritual object. Since this is the genius of the Hebrew tongue, it is not to be wondered, that it should so much abound with what some call figures and metaphors; these are not the ornaments of language or beauties of diction, as it hath been supposed, but they

are of the essence of the sacred tongue: neither is this method of using natural objects to give us ideas of spiritual the oriental way of writing, as we have been told, as if it delighted in bold figures and lofty metaphors; but it is the method of instruction, which man's present state renders necessary. While we are here in the body, we have no means of discovering spiritual objects but by divine teaching. God informs us, that such an object in the natural world stands for, and is the perfect representation of such an object in the spiritual world; and this kind of information he has given us in every Hebrew word: like a parable, it teaches and illustrates heavenly things under the expressive figures of earthly. And while men were accustomed to this method of instruction by the very nature of their language, one might expect it would run also into their compositions; which we find from fact that it has. The Old Testament, the prophetical writings especially, abound with natural images; and the great Prophet of the New Testament made such use of them, that without a parable spake he not unto the people. Wherever he was, the objects before him gave him an opportunity to spiritualize them—And this application of material things to illustrate spiritual, is what the scripture calls a parable. Of this kind are the words of the text. They are a parable in which the all-wise Spirit teaches us the things of God, by comparing them to material and outward objects. The lesson he would teach us is of eternal moment; and may the Lord God take the veil off all your hearts while I am explaining this part of the Old Testament. May he give you to understand it, and to profit from it, and to experience the truth of the whole parable in your own souls.

The prophet gives us the literal sense in these words. "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me "out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the "midst of the valley, which was full of bones. And "caused me to pass by them round about, and behold "there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they

"were very dry. And he said unto me, son of man, "Can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord "God thou knowest. And again he said unto me, "prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye "dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith "the Lord God, unto these bones, behold I will cause "breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And "I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh "upon you, and cover you with skin, and put "breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know "that I am the Lord. So I prophesied, as I was "commanded, and as I prophesied, there was a noise, "and behold a shaking, and the bones came together "bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews "and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin "covered them above, but there was no breath in them. "Then said he unto me, prophesy unto the wind, pro-"phesy, son of man, and say to the wind, thus saith "the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, "and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the "breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up "upon their feet an exceeding great army."

Now what instruction are we to receive from this scripture. It was certainly applicable to the state of the Jewish church, which was then deprived of all its ordinances. It was carried away captive into Babylon, where it had neither a temple nor the presence of God, neither an officiating priest, nor a sacrifice, and was as void of spiritual life as these dry bones were of animal life—To the church in this state the application is made—God himself makes this use of it. "Then he "said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole "house of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are "dried, and our hope is lost, we are cut off for our "parts; therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus "saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will "open your graves, and cause you to come up out of "your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel,

dissolution or absolute insensibility; it only signifies, that the sinful soul is cut off from all communion with God, who is the fountain of life; it is alienated from the life of God, and has lost its life of happiness in him, being now dead to his grace, as it may, ere long, be dead to his glory. And what then could be a more proper representation of a soul thus dead in sin, than a body dead in the grave? And what could paint in stronger colours the exceeding deadness of a sinful soul, than the exceeding dryness of the bones of a dead body? Under the death of the outward man the prophet was made to see the death of the inward man. The Spirit of the Lord gave him a full view of these souls dead in sin: "for he caused me," says he, "to "pass by them round about, to go all around them, "and behold there were very many upon the face of "the valley, and lo they were very dry:" their number was very great, and their condition was very dead; they had so long, so entirely lost all spiritual life, that the bones of dead men, from which the flesh is worn quite off, and which are become exceeding dry, were not farther removed from life, than the souls thus dead in trespasses and sins. After the prophet had gone all round them, "The Lord said unto him, Son of man, "can these bones live? Is there any power that is able "to quicken them to newness of life? And I answered, "O Lord God, Thou knowest"—Thou only knowest, what power is requisite to raise a soul dead in sin. All the powers in nature I am certain cannot do it. They can no more give life to a dead soul, than they can raise the bones of a dead man to life. Although this was the prophet's opinion, yet the Lord said unto him, "Prophesy unto these bones, and say unto them, O ye "dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith "the Lord God, Behold I will lay sinews upon you, "and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you "with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, "and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I pro-"phesied as I was commanded." He did not consult

carnal reason which would have shewed him the absurdity of doing what God commanded; but he instantly obeyed, and began preaching to the dry bones, and calling upon them to hear the word of the Lord. Would not some of you, my brethren, have taken him to be quite disordered in his head, if you had seen him preaching in a church-yard to a great number of dead dry bones? Would you not have thought Ezekiel as mad as any of our modern enthusiasts? For men reproach and ridicule the ministers of the gospel for doing the very same thing that he did. We are reckoned visionaries and madmen, and what not, because after his example we preach the word of the Lord to the dead. When we tell sinners, that they are all dead, dead to God, dead to grace, and may soon die to glory; and when we call upon them in the name of the Lord to awake from the dead sleep of sin, that Christ may give them life, then they mock and ridicule. The same men would have made as great a jest of the prophet, if they had seen him preaching to a congregation of dry bones. But he preached as he was commanded, and so do we. Lord grant the success may be the same. The blessed Jesus sends us to preach the word to dry bones, and we obey. He sends us out in his name, with his commission, and in his strength, and promises to be with us by his Spirit. We should be enthusiasts indeed, if we thought ourselves able to awaken one dead sinner without the effectual working of his power. We know, that it is he who worketh in us and by us: for without him we can do nothing; and therefore let men reproach us for doing his work. We will go on, pitying, and praying for them, and the more they reproach us, the more we will preach, and the more earnestly, to the dead in sin—And who knows but as the work is God's he may speak to the inward ears of the soul, while we are speaking to the outward ears of the body, and bid the sinner awake and live. Glory be to his holy name, for that he often accompanies this foolishness of preaching with his divine

power. Thanks be to him for setting his seal to the truth of our words, by awakening the dead through our weak ministry. O that his good Spirit may now seal the word, and by his blessing fulfil what follows in the parable—"So I prophesied as I was commanded, and "as I prophesied there was a noise," in the Hebrew, a voice, namely, the voice of God. The prophet was speaking, and to say that there was a voice while he was speaking would be mere tautology, and unmeaning repetition, if we apply it to him. But if while he spake the power of the Lord was present, then the driest bones would hear; and if while we address ourselves to the outward ears the voice of God carries the sound at the same time to the heart, then even the dead hear this almighty voice, and awake, and see their guilt and danger, and begin to be concerned about their salvation. When the Spirit of God speaks conviction to the heart, these effects always follow, and it is evident the voice was his from what is mentioned next in the parable; for as I prophesied there was a voice, and behold, a shaking—Behold, a matter worthy of the closest attention, there was a great shaking among the dry bones, even as it were an earthquake among them: for the word rendered shaking is the scripture term for an earthquake. And behold, there is as great a shaking in the soul of the sinner when he is awakened and convinced of sin; he that has been dead in sin, helpless and lost for ever in himself then begins to quake and tremble—He sees the corruption of his nature—odious and abominable altogether—He sees his life was one continued scene of open injury to God, and dishonour to his law—Looking back he beholds nothing but guilt—Looking forward he beholds nothing but everlasting destruction, upon which fear and a horrible dread overwhelm him. The holy Spirit sets home these convictions upon the conscience. He gives it such a sight of the guilt and danger of sin, that the sinner sees he cannot save himself. In this distress he continues, until the remainder

of the parable be fulfilled in him: for we read, that after the shaking—"The bones came together, bone to "his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and "the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered "them above, but there was no breath in them." Here is in the letter of the parable the outside and shape of man—a body, but it is inanimate—there is no life in it. So in the spiritual sense, if the soul should rest in the externals of religion, and sit down content with any thing short of the vital influence of the Holy Spirit, there is no life in it. Whatever may promise to animate it, still it will remain dead. Good works, ordinances, orthodoxy, are but the letter that killeth, unless the Spirit that giveth life be in them. You may belong to the best constituted church upon earth, which has sound articles and creeds like strong bones and sinews, and flesh upon them, and which has a good liturgy, and decent public worship like a fair skin to cover all; and yet in this communion your soul may be dead: for these external privileges cannot give the breath of life to the soul. "It is the Spirit that "quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," the flesh (the externals of religion) profiteth nothing unless the Spirit animate them, as we learn from the next words in the parable. "Then said he unto me, Prophesy "unto the wind and say, Thus saith the Lord God, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe "upon these slain, that they may live. So I pro-"phesied as he commanded me, and the breath came "into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their "feet, an exceeding great army." Glory be to God for daily fulfilling this part of the parable. His good Spirit daily awakens poor dead sinners, and puts the breath of divine life into them; and this he does by the weakest means, even by the foolishness of preaching, that it may appear the power comes from him, and that all the glory may return to him. He sends us out to preach, bids us call to the dead—We do as we are commanded; but we know that we could no

more raise a dead soul from the grave of sin, than we could raise a dead body from the grave of corruption. We speak our Lord's words, and he blesses them. He sends his grace along with them, and the dead hear his voice. They awake. They see their guilt and their danger: at the sight of which their hearts sink within them—they find themselves perishing—and a great trembling and violent shaking seizes them. Fear is on every side. No way is left to escape, but to fly to the Saviour of sinners. And as soon as they turn to him, he receives them gladly. He sends the holy Spirit (the dearest pledge of his love) to give them evidence of their new birth unto righteousness, and to assure them of their justification to life. Then they live unto God—and "stand up upon their feet," being enabled to go forward in the ways of holiness—"An exceeding "great army,"—an innumerable multitude, which no man could number, and they all hold swords, being expert in war, a great army of the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ fighting their way to a crown of righteousness, against all the opposition of sin and Satan, of the world and the flesh, and never quitting the field of battle, until the Captain of their salvation place the never-fading crown upon their heads.

This is, I think, the spiritual sense of the parable. We have in it, a description of man in his natural state as dead in trespasses and sins—in his awakened state as unable to do any thing to raise himself from the death of sin to newness of life—and in his justified state, as raised to spiritual and divine life by Christ, who is the life of the world, and by the effectual working of his good Spirit. These great truths, are beautifully painted in the parable. It sets them before our eyes in a very affecting manner. And I hope every one of you has been properly affected according to the view he has had of the state of his soul. But whatever impression has been made, I cannot leave the subject, without making some short practical remarks, and may the al-

Spirit apply them to the necessities of those who are concerned in them.

And first, I have a word to the dry bones, to the dead in sin. We are all in this state by nature—dead in trespasses and sins—dead to God and to the things of God. If you believe the scripture you cannot deny this. It describes your souls to be as incapable of performing any of the offices of spiritual life as the dry bones of a dead body are of performing the offices of animal life. If God and his word be true, this is the condition of every one of us by nature, and it is the first work of grace to convince us of it. When the holy Spirit begins to move in the sinner's heart, he convinces him of his lost and helpless state, and he sees and finds that without Christ he can do nothing. And can every one of you say from his own experience—I have had this conviction. If you had, then one step is taken—may he who hath begun, carry on the work, until he make you living members of Christ's mystical body. But if you was never yet convinced of your being by nature dead in trespasses and sins, then you are still alienated from the life of God: for you will not seek life from him, until you be convinced of your want of it. As transgressors, his holy law condemns you to death. The solemn sentence is passed. "The soul that "sinneth it shall die." Did you never read this sentence as standing out against yourself? Have you never had any sense of the exquisite misery of being eternally separated from God the fountain of life? Have you no sense of it at present, no thought, no concern about being alienated in body and soul, and to all eternity, from God and his glory? Oh almighty Saviour, if there be any persons here present in this state, speak to the dry bones. They can hear no voice but thine. O let the all-reviving sound, which Lazarus' dead body heard, now be heard in every dead heart. Now Lord Jesus prove thyself to be the resurrection and the life. Call to every unawakened soul in this congregation, and say, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from

the dead." O Almighty God and Saviour, send these words home to every dead sinner, that he may awake and be concerned for his salvation, and thereby may follow me in my second remark.

While the prophet was preaching, the voice of God spake to the heart, while he spake to the outward ears, and "behold there was a great shaking." The sinner shook and trembled for fear. The Lord shewed him his former dead state, and his present danger, and at the sight of both an horrible dread overwhelmed him. He beheld the perfect purity and spirituality of the divine law—he saw the vile and lothesome nature of sin—he beheld the holiness, and truth, and justice of God, armed with almighty power and ready to destroy him. Conscience witnessed against him, and haunted him with its horrors night and day. He found that hell was his desert, and he saw no way open to escape it. However hardened and obdurate he had been before, yet all these circumstances put together set him a shaking and trembling. Had he been in an earthquake, when the ground heaved and tossed with such violent shocks, that he could not stand upon it, and had he seen it opening its mouth in many a hideous crack, and swallowing up multitudes all around him, he could not have shaked and trembled more. His soul fainted within him; and he had not a ray of hope left, unless God would be pleased to stretch out his omnipotent arm, and to save him from going down to the pit of destruction.

And can every one of you, my brethren, remember when this was your case? If you were never in any distress, less or more, at the sight of your sinfulness and misery—Oh consider I beseech you your danger. You are still secure in sin, yea dead in trespasses and sins. When the holy Spirit is come to awaken your soul, his first work is to convince you of sin, and if he has not begun this work—fancy yourself to be alive—reform your outward life—become civil, and moral, and honest, yet you have not taken one step in the divine

life; if you have never been ly so long as you have not been stirred up ence stop, —your poor soul is still dead to body unless you be convinced of sin in to his glory. But if you have convinced of sin, then the parable filled in you. There has been a dry bones. They have been tremb and with great reason. Sinners whil ion, have every thing to fear that is ter They have an offended God set in battle array against them, a broken law thundering out its curses upon their guilty heads, conscience owning the guilt, the devil ready to torment, and hell open to receive them: and if the prospect of these things be not terrible, what is? Am I now speaking to any of you, who says, I am acquainted with these terrors—I have been made to see my sinfulness and my danger, and I find my helpless lost condition—dangers so surround me on every side, that I know not whither to turn myself. Is this the language of thine heart? Art thou indeed shaken from all trust and confidence in self; Then turn thee to the blessed Jesus. He is a Saviour for thee. Such as thou art he came to save—such poor, lost and ruined sinners. Wait on him. Be found in the ways of his ordinances, and he will supply all thy wants. He will give thee freely out of his fulness, grace for grace, and glory to crown all his graces.

But, methinks I hear some afflicted soul reply—I have been waiting upon the Lord Jesus long, but have found no comfort. It may be so. But who is to blame? May you not have sought comfort in a wrong manner, by placing religion in the form instead of the power, according to what is described in the third part of the parable, where we have all the parts of an human body, but for want of breath there was no life in them, and this was written to shew, that you are not to stop short of Christ and his comforts by resting in externals. You are not to be content with the form and the out-

the dead." gion, without the life and spirit of it. And words the parable condemns those persons, who upon and being first brought under some concern about their souls, are apt to trust in duties, instead of going to Christ. They set about reforming their outward behaviour, go to church, say their prayers—read the scriptures—give alms—attend constantly at the sacrament, supposing that these outward things can give life to the soul: they rest in them, as of themselves sufficient and meritorious, which is setting them up against our Saviour, and resting in them as saviours, whereas Christ alone has life to give to the dead in sin. "I "am the life," says he. Whosoever is not united to him by faith, has no true spiritual life in him, as he found, who had more duties to depend upon than any of us have, and yet he counted them but dross and dung that he might win Christ. "The life which I now live "in the flesh, says the blessed apostle, I live by "the faith of the Son of God;" it is a spiritual life derived from the Son of God, and received from him by faith, which is the breath of life in the justified soul, inspired into it by the holy Spirit, as the last part of the parable proves. The dry bones had come together, the sinews and flesh had grown up upon them, the skin was spread over all—here were all the parts of an human body, but there was no life, until the Spirit of the Lord put breath into them, and they lived, and stood up. It is the very same case with the sinful soul. Nothing can give it life but the Spirit of God. He is to the soul what breath is to the body. He is so much the breath of life, that in the Old Testament and the New the same word which stands for the breath that supports the life of the body, stands for the holy Spirit, who supports the life of the soul. The air that we breathe, and the holy Spirit, have but one name in scripture. And therefore as the body is not alive, until it breathes, so neither is the soul alive to God, until the holy Spirit infuse into it the breath of life. And as the body is alive only so long as it breathes,

in like manner the soul lives to God only so long as the holy Spirit breathes in it. Let his influence stop, and the life of grace is at an end, as the life of the body is at an end, so soon as its breathing is stopt.

My brethren, this is one of the most important truths in the Christian religion. It is the holy Spirit and his work upon the heart that makes us Christians; "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is "none of his"—He is no Christian. So say the oracles of truth. If any man—be he ever so moral and honest—a strict observer of outward duties, a good church man—a charitable man, yet if he has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his—he is none of Christ's family. He is not a living member of Christ's body. He may have a name that he liveth, but he is dead. And what good would it do you to have the name of a living man, if your body was dead? If you could neither stir nor move, if your breath was stopt, would it be of any service to you, that men said you was alive? Could their saying so raise you to life? Infinitely more useless is it to have a name, that your soul liveth, while it is dead to God. Hear this, ye formal professors, who are destitute of the life and power of religion. You are but so many dry bones. And what vast numbers have we of them in all our congregations! Oh that the almighty Spirit may put the breath of life into you, and quicken you together with Christ, and make you sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

Perhaps you think you don't stand in need of his grace. Then, if God be true, you have no more life in your soul than these dry bones had, when they lay loose and scattered up and down in the valley. Until he put his life-giving Spirit into you, you are as dead as they were. Or perhaps you think you may have his grace, and not know it. That cannot be. The holy Spirit is the convincer of sin. When he awakens your conscience, fills it with conviction, and there is a shaking in every part and faculty, what a strange shaking would it be, if you should neither know it, nor feel

it. So again, wh[illegible]he infuses into you the breath of life, and you live to God, what an unaccountable breath would this be, if having it and living by it, you should not know it? Did these dry bones know, when they were alive, and stood upon their feet? Most certainly they did. Do you know now, whether you breathe and live, or not? Just the same evidence has the soul of its being alive to God. "We know that "we are passed, says an apostle, from death unto life." We know the same, say all his disciples—We know that God hath given to us eternal life—We have his Spirit the witness, the earnest of it in our hearts, and the world may see the evidence of it in our lives and conversations.

But is not this, will some say, talking like enthusiasts? It is their very language. But then it is also the language of scripture. The Old Testament is full of this enthusiasm—The New abounds with it. You can scarce open the bible any where, without finding some high flights of enthusiasm, something concerning being quickened by the Spirit, being born of the Spirit, and raised up by him, being instructed and led by the Spirit, having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, concerning his dwelling in believers, and their having the witness of the Spirit, and being sealed by him, and sanctified, and strengthened with might by him in the inner man. If these scripture expressions savor strongly of enthusiasm, so does the liturgy of our church. Every day we pray to God that he would not take his holy Spirit from us, but would cleanse our hearts by the inspiration of his holy Spirit, and would enable us by his holy inspiration, to think those things that be good, and by his merciful guiding to perform the same, would renew us daily by his holy Spirit, and grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things: We pray to him to comfort us, even that we may rejoice evermore in his holy comfort, and that he may exalt us unto the same place, whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.

No words can be stronger than the petitions, which we have been offering up this very day at the throne of grace—" O God, forasmuch as without thee, we are " not able to please thee; mercifully grant that thy " holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our " hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Such is the language of scripture, and the language of our church. They both speak of the holy Spirit, as the vital principle of the Christian religion, so that if you take him out of it, you leave its professors like a body without breath: for the holy Spirit is to their souls what breath is to their bodies, insomuch that they cannot live one moment to God without his continual inspiration. And surely it is not enthusiasm to say, that our bodies cannot live without breath, and how then can it be enthusiasm to say, that our souls cannot live without the holy Spirit, who is the breath of our spiritual life?

Since then there lays no objection against the doctrine contained in the parable. Since all men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Since nothing can raise them from the death of sin to newness of life, but the inspiration of the Almighty, and since Christ has purchased life for the dead in sin, and the holy Spirit is to apply it and to quicken them, the discourse is now brought to a point. Only one question now remains, and that is, Has this parable been fulfilled in us? Can every one of us lay his hand upon his heart and declare in the presence of God, " I know this scripture to be " true by my own experience. The Spirit of God " shewed me my guilt and danger, at the sight of " which my unbelieving heart shook and trembled for " fear, but he gave me grace to resolve, that I would " seek Jesus, until I found him: On him I was kept " waiting, enabled to reject all hopes in my own power " or works until he put his witnessing Spirit within " me, and I knew that I was one of the children of " God by faith in Christ Jesus." Can every one of you say, that God hath dealt thus with your souls? If he

it. So again, wh[illegible]he infuses into you the breath of life, and you live to God, what an unaccountable breath would this be, if having it and living by it, you should not know it? Did these dry bones know, when they were alive, and stood upon their feet? Most certainly they did. Do you know now, whether you breathe and live, or not? Just the same evidence has the soul of its being alive to God. "We know that "we are passed, says an apostle, from death unto life." We know the same, say all his disciples—We know that God hath given to us eternal life—We have his Spirit the witness, the earnest of it in our hearts, and the world may see the evidence of it in our lives and conversations.

But is not this, will some say, talking like enthusiasts? It is their very language. But then it is also the language of scripture. The Old Testament is full of this enthusiasm—The New abounds with it. You can scarce open the bible any where, without finding some high flights of enthusiasm, something concerning being quickened by the Spirit, being born of the Spirit, and raised up by him, being instructed and led by the Spirit, having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, concerning his dwelling in believers, and their having the witness of the Spirit, and being sealed by him, and sanctified, and strengthened with might by him in the inner man. If these scripture expressions savor strongly of enthusiasm, so does the liturgy of our church. Every day we pray to God that he would not take his holy Spirit from us, but would cleanse our hearts by the inspiration of his holy Spirit, and would enable us by his holy inspiration, to think those things that be good, and by his merciful guiding to perform the same, would renew us daily by his holy Spirit, and grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things: We pray to him to comfort us, even that we may rejoice evermore in his holy comfort, and that he may exalt us unto the same place, whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.

No words can be stronger than the petitions, which we have been offering up this very day at the throne of grace—" O God, forasmuch as without thee, we are " not able to please thee; mercifully grant that thy " holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our " hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Such is the language of scripture, and the language of our church. They both speak of the holy Spirit, as the vital principle of the Christian religion, so that if you take him out of it, you leave its professors like a body without breath: for the holy Spirit is to their souls what breath is to their bodies, insomuch that they cannot live one moment to God without his continual inspiration. And surely it is not enthusiasm to say, that our bodies cannot live without breath, and how then can it be enthusiasm to say, that our souls cannot live without the holy Spirit, who is the breath of our spiritual life?

Since then there lays no objection against the doctrine contained in the parable. Since all men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Since nothing can raise them from the death of sin to newness of life, but the inspiration of the Almighty, and since Christ has purchased life for the dead in sin, and the holy Spirit is to apply it and to quicken them, the discourse is now brought to a point. Only one question now remains, and that is, Has this parable been fulfilled in us? Can every one of us lay his hand upon his heart and declare in the presence of God, " I know this scripture to be " true by my own experience. The Spirit of God " shewed me my guilt and danger, at the sight of " which my unbelieving heart shook and trembled for " fear, but he gave me grace to resolve, that I would " seek Jesus, until I found him: On him I was kept " waiting, enabled to reject all hopes in my own power " or works until he put his witnessing Spirit within " me, and I knew that I was one of the children of " God by faith in Christ Jesus." Can every one of you say, that God hath dealt thus with your souls? If he

METHOD FOR PREVENTING

ROBBERIES AND MURDERS.

MATTHEW XV. 19, 20.

Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man.

ALL these evil things, which defile the man, proceed from the heart: here the desires are first formed, and from hence they flow out, and put in motion, and animate the other faculties. And such as the fountain is, such are the streams which flow from it. If the heart be evil and corrupt in itself, the thoughts of the heart will also be evil and corrupt, and the actions which are directed by these thoughts must also partake of their evil and corruption. For the heart thinks, resolves, and then acts; and if the thought be evil, the resolution and the act, which are the direct consequences of it, must be also evil. Nothing but evil can flow from an evil heart.

Whenever the scripture speaks of the faculties of the soul, it uses words borrowed from the faculties of the body, because we are not capable of forming any idea of spiritual, unless they be compared to material objects. The soul has its spring and principle of motion as well as the body, and this we call the heart, borrowing the word from that part, which is known to be the spring and principle of all the motions in the human frame: for from the heart proceeds that vital blood,

which carries on every operation throughout the body, and from which every vessel and organ has its proper nourishment ministered. The heart has the same use and office in our little world, as the sun has in the great world, being the fountain of life and genial warmth, of growth and strength in the microcosm of man. And when we apply this word to the soul, we fix the same meaning to it. The heart is that part which puts all the other faculties of the soul in motion, it is the fountain from whence our thoughts flow, and our resolutions and actions are only so many streams, which take a good or a bad tincture according to the nature of the spring, from whence they have their origin.

In this sense our blessed Lord here speaks of the soul; he makes the heart the fruitful cause of every vice, supposing it to be polluted even at the very fountain head; and how then is it possible there should be any thing but pollution in the channels, which issue from it? If the heart be corrupt, so will be the actions. From an evil heart nothing can proceed, but murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false-witness, and blasphemy: for when the principle which sets all these in motion is defiled, what can spring from it but defilement?

This is our Lord's doctrine, and never was their greater occasion to consider it, than in the present times, when these vices are grown to such an enormous height, that they are openly committed in defiance of all law, divine and human. The legislature has been lately alarmed at their prodigious increase, and has been trying to find out some effectual remedy: but what has been hitherto attempted has not met with the desired success. Robberies, murders, &c. are still as common as ever, and will become daily more common, unless we strike at the root of the evil. The heart is the cause of all, and no act of parliament can touch the heart. It is out of the reach of every human tribunal. The vices which by our natural corruption have got into the heart, cannot be displaced by the wisest laws and edicts; these can only regulate the outward actions.

The polluted fountain is still inaccessible to any authority but the great Creator's. He alone can give the almighty fiat, let it be clean, and it is clean. Nothing can purify it from the unclean thoughts of murder, adultery, fornication, &c. but his divine grace and virtue; to which may he enable us now to commit the guidance of our hearts. We beseech thee to take them, O eternal Spirit, under thy gracious influence, and let no unclean thought enter into them, while we are meditating upon these words of our God and Saviour —"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, "adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphe-"mies: these are the things which defile a man."

First, It is here asserted, that the heart, the fountain of all our actions, is polluted.

Secondly, The manner in which it became polluted is here plainly implied, and this will lead us,

Thirdly, To enquire into the means of cleansing and purifying it.

First our blessed Lord here declares, that the heart, the fountain of all thought and motion, is polluted. In its natural state it is entirely impure. It is the unclean residence of the foulest spirits, even of murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, and blasphemy. These are they which by nature dwell in the heart and defile the man: for corrupt nature is always disposed to receive some one or all of these polluted tempers, as temptation shall offer. The propensity to them is universal. Our church has accurately described this point in her ninth article.

"Original sin is the fault and corruption of the "nature of every man, that naturally is engendered "of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far "gone from original righteousness, and is of his own "nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth al-"ways contrary to the Spirit, and therefore in every "person born into the world it deserved God's wrath "and damnation."

This was the opinion of our reformers, and if you

find any difficulty in giving your assent to it, the arguments upon which they built it will, I hope, satisfy you perfectly. The express testimony of the Creator of the hearts of all men, and the experience of thinking men from the beginning of the world to this day, were the chief authorities upon which they grounded their opinion. The whole scripture supposes man to be in a state of corruption, and several passages express the universality of this corruption. It is thus delivered, Gen. vi. 5. in the clearest terms. "And God saw that the wick-"edness of man was great in the earth, and that every "imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil "continually." Man does not here signify any one man, or race of men, but mankind, the whole human nature, which is said to be so polluted with original wickedness, that every imagination, not one excepted, of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, and continually too. What a fountain then of deadly poison is the human heart, since all the streams which flow from it are evil, and continually evil? The universal spreading of this malignant infection could not be expressed in stronger words, than to declare, that there was not one imagination in the heart, but what was evil, and always evil. Such is man in his natural state: and might not then the apostle truly say of it, Eph. ii. 3. "We are all by "nature the children of wrath even as others: for the "scripture hath concluded all (men, both Jews and "Gentiles) under sin."

This is the scripture account of the heart of the natural man, and experience confirms it. Men are in fact such as the scripture describes them, a race of fallen corrupt beings. We find none of them upright and perfect, no not one. That moral rectitude of nature, which some metaphysical divines dream of, has no existence among the sons of Adam. Heathen writers as well as Christian prove it to be but a dream: for of the corruption of nature they all complain, and give us melancholy proofs of the prevalency of the vices mentioned in the text in every country and in every age.

In the present age we see and feel them: they are grown to such an enormous height at present, that they are become a reproach to our religion, and a dishonour to our laws. Not a day passes, but we hear of some robbery, or murder, or adultery, &c. and the fountain from whence they all spring is the heart. And can the heart then be clean by nature, and yet send forth such polluted streams? Certainly the same spring cannot send forth sweet water and bitter? That which sends forth nothing but corruption, must be corrupt in its very origin. The peccant matter must lie at the fountain head, and how rank and venomous it is we can have no doubt, if we will but open our eyes, and survey that deluge of wickedness, which now covers the face of the earth.

It is certain then that the heart of man is by nature polluted. Scripture and sad experience forbid us to doubt of it; and yet against the evidence of these authorities there are some men, who call it in question, and who think they shew their superior reason by believing neither God, nor their own senses. What God declares to them they cannot but see is a matter of fact, and yet because they find some difficulty in accounting for the manner in which the heart became so polluted, they would therefore strangely infer, that it is not polluted at all. This is a very absurd conduct, but it is common to all unbelievers, and therefore it is necessary to speak to the

Second particular, wherein it was proposed to consider the manner in which the human heart became thus polluted. None of the ancient philosophers, nor none of the modern reasoners have given us any satisfactory account upon this head. The origin of evil is a subject, which has been always debated in the schools of the infidels, and they have not yet produced any solution which their own advocates are agreed to defend. How evil came into the heart is, upon the plan of their natural and metaphysical religion, absolutely unaccountable. And this is a good presumptive proof

in favour of the scripture account: for the heart is certainly polluted, and the greatest men among the ancient philosophers and the modern unbelievers have been able to offer nothing satisfactory, neither to themselves nor others, concerning the manner of its pollution. But the scripture accounts for it thus in a plain intelligible way.

God created all things at first in a perfect state. When he had finished his works, he took a survey of them, and pronounced them all to be very good. There was no pain in the natural, and no evil in the spiritual world. Man was innocent. His heart was right with God. The thoughts of it were clean and pure altogether. He knew no guilt; he had no fear; and therefore he was happy.

The creature, who first introduced evil into the works of God, was the devil: for thus says our blessed Saviour, "The devil was a murderer from the begin-"ning, and a liar, and the father of it," John viii. 44. In the beginning he murdered our first parents, by seducing them into that sin, which subjected their bodies to death, and both their bodies and souls to eternal condemnation. And he was the father of lies as well as of murder: for all was truth and innocence, until he offered the first lying suggestion to the heart; and basely insinuated, that God had maliciously forbidden our first parents the use of the tree of knowledge. To this insinuation they hearkened, they suffered it to make an impression upon their hearts, and disbelieving what their gracious Creator and heavenly Father had revealed to them, they built their faith on the words of the lying spirit, and acted accordingly. Thus he deceived them, and in them all their posterity: for St. John, speaking of the great dragon, says, "This is that "old serpent called the devil and Satan, which deceiv-"eth the whole world." Rev. xii. 9.

The consequence of our first parents being deceived by his lying insinuations was the loss of their innocence and happiness. With their innocence they lost the

grace and presence of God: "[illegible] of purer eyes "than to behold the least iniquity," and after his divine grace and presence were withdrawn, the heart was left to itself, and to its own natural workings, which under the tempter's management could produce nothing but murders, adulteries, thefts, &c. which are the corrupt fruits of a corrupt heart. And into whatever heart the divine grace is not returned, the same corruptions still remain, and we see the effects of them still breaking out in the same abominable vices: for the heart of the natural man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—so wicked, that sin is engraven upon it with a character, which no human art or power can erase. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and "with the point of a diamond; it is graven upon the "table of their heart." Jer. xvii. 1. And what hand can come at these impressions, which are cut so deep as to be incorporated into the very substance of the heart? What power can reach and deface them, but his alone, whose prerogative it is to search the heart and the reins?

This is the scripture account. And as it is most plain and rational, to which what can unbelievers object? They have nothing to substitute instead of this; and they can urge nothing against it, except they enquire, Why God should suffer man to fall, if he foresaw that it would be attended with such dreadful consequences. But this is only asking, Why he made man a free agent? For if he was free, he must have a capacity to make a wrong, as well as a right use of his free will, and therefore he could not be placed in a state falling from which was impossible. That the first man was created with free will we have a most melancholy demonstration, the effects of which are still seen and felt all over the world, and that he had every assistance which could enable him to make a right use of his free will, the scripture gives us a full account: but he abused it. Upon which the assistance before given, was withdrawn, and after this assistance was taken out of

the heart, there was nothing left in it but its own fleshly desires and inclinations, and when these were spirited up by the lying suggestion of the infernal tempter, what could come out of such an heart, but murder, adultery, fornication, robbery, with all the other polluted works of the flesh and the devil.

Upon this state of the case it appears, that man lost by the fall the two chief blessings of his spiritual life, namely, the image of God, and the Spirit of God. Sin blotted out the image of God, in which man was at first created, and the scripture expressly declares, that we were afterwards born in the image of our father Adam with all his worldly desires, and corrupt inclinations, Gen. v. 3. And these the sacred writers generally term The flesh, signifying by this word all the carnal appetites which govern man since the fall, and of which the apostle declares, "That they who are in the "flesh cannot please God," Rom. viii. 8. Because while they are governed by the flesh, and not by the Spirit, they continue in the image of the earthly Adam, and in the likeness of his fallen nature; by which they are also alienated from the Spirit of God. The divine and holy Spirit left the polluted temple of the heart after sin had profaned it. He is of purer eyes than to behold the least iniquity, and therefore he could not dwell in an impure heart; and upon his retiring, it became alienated from the life of God, being now a perfect stranger to all the graces of that spiritual life, which innocent man had always, and liberally enjoyed. And after the divine image was thus extinguished, and the divine Spirit was gone, which the scripture expressly declares were the two fatal effects of the fall, then the heart of man was under the dominion of its own fleshly desires, and was ready to commit any of the abominable deeds of the flesh, whenever opportunity should offer, and inclination invite, and the devil strongly solicit to the commission of them.

Now every man who comes into the world is by nature in this state, and he will continue in it, until he

finds the misery of it: until th[illegible]f his distress force him to cry out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? This conviction of our misery is the first step towards a deliverance from it. So soon as we find ourselves sick, we are half cured: for if we can but bring ourselves to go with humility and prayer to the almighty physician, he has promised to give us freely every thing proper for our relief. He is both able and willing to cleanse the fountain of the heart from all its corruptions, which is the .

Third and last enquiry I was to make: for though man be miserable in himself, yet God hath not left him without remedy. The great design of Christianity is to restore man to the state from whence he fell, and by the same steps, through which he fell. Sin put an entire stop to the divine grace and influence, which are as necessary to the soul as breath is to the body, and when they were withdrawn, the sinner then lost the image of God, and the Spirit of God: through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ the divine grace and influence are offered to us again, and whoever seeks them by humility and prayer, until he receive them, is then made a partaker of the Spirit of God, who first makes the heart faithful and penitent, and afterwards justifies it by the blood of Christ, and sanctifies it by forming in it all the sweet and holy tempers of the blessed Jesus, in which the image of God now consists. And when the heart is thus created anew and regenerated, then is that great change perfected, of which the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. "As we have born the image of the "first Adam, who is of the earth, in like manner shall "we bear the image of the second Adam, who is the "Lord from heaven." And whoever is renewed after the image of this second Adam, he has a clean and a pure heart, and a sweet fountain might as soon send forth poisonous water, as this sanctified heart can produce murder, adultery, fornication, or any of the filthy works of the flesh.

This is the scripture account of the means of cleansing the heart. The great purifier is Jesus Christ, whose blood has infinite merit to wash away the pollutions of the whole world. The holy Spirit is the gracious agent, who purifies the heart with this all-meritorous blood. It is his office to take out by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus all the guilt of our corrupt nature, and "to "create in us a new heart and a right spirit,"—the new heart bears the image of our merciful Saviour, and the right spirit is no longer alienated from the life of God, but lives in holy communion and fellowship with the holy Spirit. And thus the sinner becomes a new man and a new creature. His soul is endued with a new set of faculties and tempers entirely Christian, and his heart which was formerly the habitation of the foulest vices, of murder, adultery, fornication, &c. is now consecrated, and made an holy temple for the living God.

This is the only method, which the scripture has taught us, of cleansing the heart from those worldly and carnal tempers with which it is by nature infected. If you refuse to believe the scripture, try any other method; but be assured you must come to this at last. Experience will bring you to it. You will find, God grant you may find it in time, that nothing is able to purify the heart, but the blood of the Lamb of God, and that nothing is able to apply it to the heart, but the eternal Spirit. You will be the more fully convinced of this the more you try other things: see first how far the boasted religion of nature, and its moral rectitude, and the fitness of things, and such like metaphysical non-entities, can reform the heart—make your experiments upon the liberal arts and sciences—go through them one after another—study books and men—try every thing that wit can invent or money purchase, and withhold nothing from your soul of all its desires—and then sit down, and carefully and impartially examine your own heart, and judge, how far all these worldly pursuits and attainments have reformed it. And what is the issue? Are you really

better? Do you find your heart more free from corruption then it was when you first set out? You will not, you cannot assert it: because reason and matter of fact are against you; they demonstrate, that our worldly tempers must be fed and encouraged by these worldly pursuits and attainments; for it is a glaring contradiction to suppose that we can increase our spirituals, by laying out all our time and pains upon temporals. Be therefore assured that the more you try these worldly things, the worse you will be: and the longer you try them, the more difficult you will find it to be set right. They have no virtue to take one single vice out of the heart, but as they fall in with our corrupt inclinations, they must encourage and strengthen every vice, which is in the heart. If you try all the powers upon earth, you will find by experience, that the heart is out of their reach, and at last, if ever you see the face of God with joy, you must conclude, that there is nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ, and the operation of his good Spirit, which is able to cleanse your polluted hearts, and to renew a right spirit within you.

Thus it is abundantly evident from experience, that nothing can purify and take away the natural pollutions of the heart, but the blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled upon it by the holy Spirit. This is the only gospel method. And it is able to purify by faith and take away all these pollutions which nothing else can: for its power is also abundantly evident from experience. It has been found effectual, after all other methods have failed. It has been tried ever since sin first entered into the world, and has ever succeeded. And this single circumstance seems sufficient to recommend it to the minds of all serious persons, and to determine them to receive it as the sovereign remedy of their natural corruptions. We have in the first ages after Christ a particular account of the great change made in men's hearts upon their embracing the gospel. And these accounts are so well attested, that if the strongest his-

torical evidence can gain your assent, they will appear to you full and decisive. I remember to have seen a passage in Lactantius, where in his apology for the Christians of his time, he has these words, "Give me "a man (says he to the heathens) who is passionate, "malicious, headstrong, with a few gospel precepts, I "will render him as meek as a lamb. Give me one "who is covetous, I will soon persuade him to be "liberal and charitable. Give me one who dreads "afflictions and death, I will make him run and court "martyrdom. Give me an unclean, intemperate, un-"just, cruel, sinful wretch, I will, by the knowledge "of Christ, and by the influence of his laws render him "chaste, sober, merciful, innocent, and holy." Lactantius had good reason for what he here asserts: he had seen the gospel of Christ take these vices out of men's hearts, and we have seen the same happy effects of it in our days; not indeed in so great a number, but, God be praised for it, we have enow to demonstrate to any unbeliever, that the same gospel has still the same power. You do not see so much of its power, because you do not hear so much of the gospel. But wherever the pure gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, and men receive it with faith, their experience daily confirms what Lactantius long ago observed. You still see it work the same real change in men's tempers, which cannot arise from any heat of fancy, or flight of enthusiasm, or sudden rapture of devotion, because it is a sober, regular, thorough change, that reforms the heart, and all its affections, and influences the whole behaviour, rendering a man confident and uniform throughout the whole course of his future life. That such changes are wrought at this day is an undoubted matter of fact. Sinners, and great sinners too, are brought to see the error of their ways, to forsake their wicked courses, to lead a new life, to follow the commandments of God, and to walk from henceforth in his holy ways. This is an entire, a total change. When a sinner becomes a Christian, he

is absolutely a new creature and a new man, insomuch that you may truly say of him, "old things are passed "away, behold, all things are become new;" for he neither thinks, speaks, nor acts, as he used to do. He has a new set of senses and faculties. He neither sees things in the same light he did before, nor hears after the same manner. What formerly pleased him, now displeases. The very end of all his pursuits is changed, and his happiness is placed on a different object. We see this perfect change produced every day, when the gospel enters into any man's heart. As it takes possession, the corrupt passions retire. The holy Spirit purifies the fountain and then all the streams run pure. It is evident, that he has given the heart a new nature, because what proceeds from it is not influenced by the natural man. All is renewed. The murderer is humane and loving, the fornicator and adulterer are chaste, the thief is honest, the false-witness true, the blasphemer, a Christian. Such is the glorious change, which the holy Spirit makes when he sprinkles the heart with the all-purifying blood of the Lamb of God.

And now we have discovered the cause of the evil, and its remedy. The heart of every man we find to be by nature corrupt, destitute entirely of divine grace, and disposed as temptation shall offer to commit any wickedness: for from this fruitful fountain, from the heart of the natural man, proceed murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, perjuries, and blasphemies. And nothing but the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus can dry up this fountain of sin, and nothing can carry the virtue of it to the heart but an almighty Spirit. Human laws, which are the only expedient lately attempted, cannot come to the head and source of this corrupt fountain. It lies too deep. Their power cannot reach it, and much less purify it. An act of parliament can only regulate the outward behaviour. It can take no cognizance of a crime, until it break out into some overt act, and therefore it can

have no influence over the heart. If murder, adultery, robbery, &c. be in the heart, there all statute laws leave them; and the inclination only waits for a fair opportunity, which it will always embrace, whenever there is a prospect of escaping the lash of the law. Thus no sin is hereby prevented. Only the commission of it is rendered more private, and the heart is put upon inventing schemes, how it may gratify itself in its pleasures, without incurring the pains and penalties, which the law threatens to inflict. By this means the corruption that seems to be diminished in the channels, gathers and increases at the fountain-head, where the more it is stopt, the more it ferments and pollutes itself. Since this is the case, what reformation can we expect from the interposition of human authority? Supposing the legislature should follow his majesty's gracious instructions from the throne, and try to find out some new laws for putting a stop to robberies and murders, yet experience would soon prove them to be ineffectual. All the human laws which ever were made, or ever will be made, cannot reform one single person, because they cannot reach the heart. Gospel and not law should be here employed. The gospel can take sin out of the heart, but the law can only make the commission of it more private. The clergy therefore should be called upon, and not the magistrate. This is under God, the peculiar business of the ministers of the gospel, and it is, I fear, owing to their great neglect of their duty, that robberies and murders are become so common. Our people grow more corrupt in their morals, not for want of good statute laws, but for want of good gospel ministers. For it is certain, that the gospel, and nothing else, can take murder, adultery, fornication, robbery, &c. out of the heart, and it is as certain, that the gospel has taken them out of the heart, wherever it has been properly received: and therefore either in the manner of applying the gospel, or in not applying it at all, there is a great failing somewhere or other among us. God Almighty grant, that

they who are guilty may see their error, and may have grace to repent and amend.

And now let me intreat you, my brethren, to pray that these truths may make a proper impression upon your minds. You have heard me labour this point much of late. It appears to me to be the most important in Christianity, and therefore in several discourses I have been endeavouring to give you a just sense of your state and condition by nature. What success they may have met with depends upon God, whose blessing upon them I do most sincerely implore. All our preaching can do nothing to your hearts without his grace, and I beseech him that, out of the riches of his infinite love to sinners, through Jesus Christ, he would be pleased to let you see your own hearts: for until you behold that defilement and corruption, in which the heart of every man lies by nature, you will see but little necessity for a Saviour. And this divine grace I hope he will now send into all our hearts, that you may be disposed to receive favourably, and to profit by, two short remarks, with which I shall apply the doctrine, first to them who do not believe it, then to them who have given their free assent.

If any of you do not believe the doctrine, you are in a very dangerous situation, because you are on the very brink of destruction, and yet do not see your danger. Can you think your heart is not corrupt? This very thought demonstrates its corruption: for sinners you certainly are: and all sin comes from the heart, and can the heart send forth a whole life of sin, and not be sinful itself? This is impossible. To believe such an impossibility argues a most dangerous state of mind. A man does not cheat himself more, who fancies himself to be in good health, when he has been long ill, and is just dying, than he who fancies his heart to be pure, although every thing that flows from it is impure. This is one of the greatest delusions of sin. It lulls the sinner into a state of security, and tempts him to believe, that his heart is pure and without spot,

although it be nothing but corruption and deformity. Whoever is tempted into this belief does not know himself. And if any of you have fallen into this fatal error, I pray God to let you know yourselves: for you are as yet perfect strangers to your own breasts. If you were to see them naked and open, with all the little lurking places, where self-love and vain-glory conceal your failings, the moment you beheld the horrid sight, it would force you to cry out, "Jesus, master, have "mercy on me." Oh! What a blessing would it be, if you could now speak these words from your hearts. I hope you will. And may the Lord God of heaven shew you, what you really are by nature, and then make you what you ought to be by grace.

To you who believe the doctrine, I need not use many words, because you are convinced, that the heart is a polluted fountain, from whence all vices spring, and that nothing can purify it, but the blood of the Lamb of God sprinkled upon it by the holy Spirit. This is the firm belief of every Christian. I hope you know it to be true, both from scripture and from experience. You find that the fountain has been cleansed, because the streams run pure. Your lives and actions shew, that God has created a new heart, and has renewed a right spirit within you, and it is your whole care and study to keep this new heart clean and holy. But whenever you find any defilement beginning to arise, even in thought, immediately send up your prayers to God. Intreat his grace to keep you from the pollution of sin, and if you always make him your refuge and strength, constantly seeking him in the ways of his ordinances, then his holy Spirit will keep out of your hearts all those corruptions, which defile the man, and your Lord Jesus will so purify you by his infinite merits, that you shall be presented before God the Father without spot of sin unto salvation. Blessed Lord and Saviour carry these truths to all our hearts; accompany them we intreat thee, with thy blessing; and keep our hearts pure by thy grace, until thou bring them safe unto thy glory. *Amen.*

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE BENEFIT WHICH

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

IS OF TO MAN,

IN HIS JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE:

PREACHED AT

CHRIST-CHURCH, IN NEWGATE-STREET,

On Whitsun-Monday, May 19th, 1755.

PURSUANT TO THE

WILL OF MISS ELIZABETH HILL,

LATE OF FALMOUTH, CORNWALL.

The fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness.—EPH. v. 9.

---

be reckoned an Enthusiast, while the scripture is on my side, or an Hutchinsonian, while the Church of England supports me; and if men will call the plain doctrines of scripture Enthusiasm, and will treat the articles, and homilies, and liturgy of our church as Hutchinsonianism, I hope I shall live and die a Church of England-Hutchinsonian-Enthusiast.

DISCOURSE

ON THE

HOLY SPIRIT.

EZEK. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

OUR blessed Saviour shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of his apostles forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and being assembled together with them, he commanded them, that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me; for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. And according to his most true promise, the Holy Ghost came down as at this time from heaven,

with a sudden great sound, as it had been a mighty wind, in the likeness of fiery tongues, lighting upon the apostles, to teach them, and to lead them to all truth, giving them both the gifts of divers languages, and also boldness with fervent zeal, constantly to preach the gospel unto all nations, whereby we have been brought out of darkness and error, into the clear light and true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This is the subject of the present festival. We are here assembled to commemorate the gifts and graces which the holy Spirit bestowed upon the apostles, and to bless God for our interest in them. The same Spirit is still with us, and will abide with us for ever. He is with us, not to bring the world over to the outward profession of Christianity; for that is already effected, and the extraordinary powers, which were necessary to effect it are ceased. Christianity is established, and outward miracles are no longer needful to be the outward proofs of it. But the holy Spirit has still the same inward work to carry on, which he had in the apostles' time, and it requires the same degree of divine and almighty power, although it be not exerted in outward miracles. The mind of every man is by nature in darkness and ignorance, blind as to the things of God; this he has to enlighten with saving truth. The will and all the affections are depraved, and it is his gracious office to incline and dispose them to comply with the will of God. And after the understanding is enlightened, and the heart renewed, we have still no power to walk in the ways of holiness, without the special grace of the holy Spirit, whose guidance is necessary every moment, and for every thought, and word, and work. These are called the ordinary operations of the Spirit of God, not as if they were less divine, or any thing short of the almighty operations, in the apostolic age, but because these were extraordinary, given for a certain fixed time, to carry on a particular work, but the former were common to all believers, to the apostles themselves as believers, and

are to be the ordinary gifts and graces of every Christian unto the end of the world. And whoever has received these ordinary operations, has in his own heart clear and full testimony of the Godhead, and almighty power of the blessed Spirit. He wants no outward miracles. This great inward work is to him complete evidence; and he is able to rest his salvation with as full trust and confidence upon it, as if he had seen the apostles exert their miraculous gifts and graces. May the Lord and giver of all grace be pleased to bestow upon you this inward witness, and may he enable you to look up to him for it while I am,

First, Illustrating these truths from the prophet's authority in the text, and then

Secondly, Applying them to your spiritual use and benefit.

And by the consideration of these two particulars, I hope to be able to answer the good purposes of our present meeting. We are called together by the will of a late charitable and pious lady, who appointed a sermon to be preached upon this day concerning the "benefit which the holy Spirit of God is of to man, "during his journey through this life." The subject is suitable to the great festival, which the church now celebrates, and the words which I have read contain a clear and full account of the benefit we receive from the holy Spirit from the beginning to the end of our Christian life. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, "and ye shall be clean," &c. The clean water was to be sprinkled upon them to cleanse the soul; this effect is here ascribed to it; but water cannot reach the soul, or if it could, yet it was not able so to act upon it, as to cleanse it from any sinful filthiness. But the Spirit of God acts upon our spirits, as water does upon the body, and therefore it was the outward and visible sign of his inward and spiritual grace in the Old Testament, as well as the New. The phrase of sprinkling clean water to cleanse them from sin refers to the legal ablutions, and more particularly to the great typical

purification for sin, of which we read Numbers xix. The ashes of the red heifer, which was burnt without the camp, were to be mixed with pure running water to be a purification for sin, and whoever contracted any legal uncleanness, and had not this sin-water sprinkled upon him to purify himself, that soul was to be cut off from among the congregation. St. Paul has applied part of this service to our Lord's suffering without the gate, Heb. xiii. 11, 12, 13. and St. John has applied the other part, John vii. 38, 39. where upon Christ's describing the rivers of living water, which should flow from believers, he says, "But this he spake of the "Spirit," he spake of water as the known emblem of the Spirit, and the Christian church has always used it for his emblem in the sacrament of baptism, wherein his grace cleanses to the purifying of the soul, as water cleanses to the purifying of the flesh.

Water then is the instituted type of the holy Spirit, and pouring out water to cleanse, is, in the scripture manner of expression, pouring out of the holy Spirit to cleanse the soul; and his cleansing grace must be the thing here spoken of, because it was to purify them from all sin. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, "and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and "from all your idols will I cleanse you," from all the filthiness of sin, and from all the guilt of idolatry I will purify them. Sin polluted all the faculties of the soul, and my good Spirit shall cleanse them all. The understanding he shall purify by removing its natural blindness, and by opening their eyes to see the error of their ways, that they may be brought to Jesus Christ for salvation, and may have their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience with the all purifying blood of the Lamb of God which will justify them, and may have grace and power to walk in the statutes of the Lord, and to keep his judgments, which will sanctify them; and thus he cleanses all the faculties: for it follows in the second verse of the text, "A new heart also will I "give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and

"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, "and I will give you an heart of flesh." The cleansing of the heart is the greatest work of divine grace, because there is in every sinner hardness, and an impenitent heart, which no human power can soften. The scripture speaks of it in the strongest expressions, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and "with the point of a diamond, it is graven upon the "table of the heart;" and what power is able to erase this deep engraving, except the almighty God, who declares, "I will give you a new heart," renewed in all its faculties, "and a new spirit will I put within you," endued with new appetites and new affections, "and I "will take away the stony heart," the refreshing streams of my grace shall soften the old hardened heart of sin, which would take no good impression, "and I will give "you an heart of flesh," soft and pliable, yielding to the motions of my grace, and willing to have the law engraved by the Spirit of the living God upon the fleshly tables of the heart. And after the heart and the affections are thus renewed, and disposed to love the will of God, the holy Spirit was still to proceed, and to go on in the work of sanctification, in which his grace is absolutely necessary. Even after the stony heart is taken out we still want his guidance, and whenever he leaves us to ourselves, we cannot take one step in our journey towards heaven. And therefore God promises to them who had a new heart, "that he would put his Spirit "within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes." His Spirit should be their guide, both to lead them into the way of God's commandments, and to give them strength and power to walk in these ways steadily unto the end: for the light of nature could never direct sinners into the paths of God's commandments, nor could the best natural abilities go forward in them, unless God should put his Spirit within us, and give us power to walk in his statutes. We want his support every step we take throughout the whole work of sanctification. If we go forward, he is the cause. He

ves us both the will and the power; for it is he who orketh in us both to will and to do. It is the Spirit God within us, who causes us to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them.

And thus the prophet has taught us of what benefit e holy Spirit is to man during his journey through is life. We cannot so much as set out upon our urney to heaven, until he cleanse all the faculties, by moving the blindness of the understanding, and the epravity of the will and affections. It is his office to give us a new heart and a new spirit, disposed to reive impressions of the divine law, and then to endue with power to walk in the statutes of God, and to eep his judgments, and to do them; so that every ep we take from the first moment we set out, until e happily arrive at the end of our journey, is directed nd supported by the holy Spirit of God. This is the rophet's doctrine, which I come

Secondly, To apply to your spiritual use and benefit. And if we make a right use of it, we must not only ndeavour to be convinced of its truth, but also to find he power of it operating upon our lives and conversaions; for it would be to no purpose to believe, that he holy Spirit is the author and finisher of the whole vork of grace, if this belief should rest unoperative in he head, and never dispose us to seek the experience f it in the heart, and in the rest of the faculties. Since is grace is to cleanse us from all the pollutions of sin, nd to create in us a new heart, and to renew a right pirit within us, and to give us power to walk in the vay of God's commandments, let us not hear these ruths as mere speculative points, but let us suffer the onviction of them to operate in our lives, and to carry is to seek our own interest in them. And I hope he blessed Spirit will render profitable to these good urposes what I have to offer concerning the usefulness f his guidance throughout the journey of life.

Sin polluted the whole man, and made every part nd power unclean and abominable altogether, and the

prophet ascribes to the holy Spirit the whole work of cleansing the soul. His grace is necessary to purify every faculty. He begins with removing the darkness of the understanding, and enlightening it with all-saving truth, of which by nature we are ignorant. Sin rendered us incapable of seeing spiritual objects. It did not entirely destroy the organ of sight, but it entirely stopped all communion between it, and the fountain of light, and brought the soul into such a state as the body would be in, if the sun was blotted out of heaven, and the moon and stars were no more to reflect their enlivening rays upon the earth. This would be a most uncomfortable and heavy night, in which, although the bodily organ of sight remained, yet these outward objects would be as invisible, as if the organ was quite destroyed. And sin produced the same effects in the spiritual world. Every son of Adam is in darkness and the shadow of death, until the holy Spirit of God enlighten the eyes of the understanding. St. Paul's account of the Gentiles is this, (Eph. iv. 18). "they had the understanding darkened, being "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance "that is in them, because of the blindness of their "heart." Sin darkened the understanding and alienated them from the life of God, by separating them from that divine light, which is the principle of their spiritual life, and therefore they lived no longer unto God, but were cut off from all intercourse and communion with him. In this state of darkness and blindness we all continue, entirely ignorant of the things of God, until his good Spirit manifest them unto us. The natural understanding in its highest refinement cannot discover them; "for the natural man receiveth not the things "of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto "him, neither can he know them, because they are "spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) The natural man cannot receive spiritual things. God must reveal them unto him by his Spirit, before he can have the least discernment of them, even what is revealed con-

in scripture cannot be discerned, until
open the eyes to behold it. And under
his truth the prophet thus intreats God,
mine eyes, that I may behold wond-
out of thy law," Psalm cxix. 18. to open
behold them was the work of God. And
ys, "Give me understanding," (it was the
) "that I may learn thy commandments.
servant, give me understanding, that I may
testimonies," Psalm cxix. 73, 125. And
effect St. Paul prays for his Ephesians,
d of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of
ld give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and
in the knowledge of him, "that the eyes
understanding might be enlightened." This
ork of God. He was to give unto them the
d the Spirit was to give them wisdom, and to
knowledge of God to them, by which means
of their understanding would be enlightened.
s the doctrine of scripture; and I may confirm
n authority, which I esteem next to the word
and that is the sense of our church upon this
In the collect for the 5th Sunday after Easter
ches us to pray, "O Lord, from whom all good
s do come; grant to us thy humble servants,
by thy holy inspiration we may think those
gs that be good," &c. We cannot so much as
a good thought, unless we have the holy inspira-
f God: and again on the 9th Sunday after Trinity
ay, "Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the
rit to think and do always such things as be right-
, that we who cannot do any thing that is good
thout thee, may by thee be enabled to live accord-
g to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord."
the same purpose we read in the third part of the
nily for Rogation week, "Let us meekly call upon
he bountiful Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to inspire us with
his presence, that we may be able to hear the goodness
of God to our salvation. For without his lively in-

"spiration, can we not so much as speak the name of "the mediator. No man can say, that Jesus is the "Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Much less should we "be able to understand these great mysteries, that be "opened to us by Christ. For we have received, saith "St. Paul, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit "which is of God, for this purpose, that we may know "the things which are freely given to us of God. In "the power of the Holy Ghost resteth all ability to "know God and to please him. It is he that purifi-"eth the mind by his secret working. He enlighten-"eth the heart to conceive worthy thoughts of Al-"mighty God." These authorities are clear. They expressly declare, that we cannot think such things as be rightful without the holy inspiration of the Spirit of God. These are the sentiments of scripture, and of the church of England, concerning the first step we are to take in our Christian course.

By removing the darkness of the natural understanding, and by enlightening it with all saving truth, the holy Spirit enables us to see the way to heaven, the next step is to dispose the will to walk in it: for after we see the right way, yet we have no desire to walk in it, until he renew the heart. It is the work of his grace to incline the will, and to dispose it aright, that it may consent to the will of God: for our wills are by nature corrupt. The will of the flesh is opposite to the will of God; and our affections are so depraved, that they choose only evil, and continually. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great "in the earth, and that every imagination of the "thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5. And this continually evil heart is also obdurately evil. It is stony and rocky, harder than adamant. All the powers in nature cannot soften it. Sin has rendered it incapable of any good impression, unless it be made by an almighty arm. He alone who created the heart can make it relent before him. To soften an hardened heart is as great a work as to create

a world, and therefore the prophet prays, "create in "me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit "within me." To create, is to make a thing out of nothing, and the same creative power which brought the heavens and the earth out of nothing is necessary to create in the sinner a clean heart: for to cast him in a new mould, and to make him a new man, is harder than to make him a man at first; because nothing opposed his creation. God spake, and it was done. But the heart, which was conceived in sin, has lived in sin, and has loved sin, and placed all its affections upon it, has an utter aversion to this new creation. And what power is able to take the love of sin out of the heart, and to render it willing to be made pure and holy? Say, who is equal to this great work? Certainly, no created power. He alone can do it, who turneth the hard rock into a standing water, and the flint stone into a springing well. He can do it, and he has promised, "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit "will I put within you, and I will take away your "stony heart, and I will give you an heart of flesh, "and I will put my Spirit within you." My Spirit shall work this great change. He shall take the hard stony heart out of you, which is altogether sinful, and shall enable you to delight in the law of God in the inner man. And thus he renews the heart, "for we "are saved by the washing of regeneration, and "renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii. 5.) And

This is the language of our church. On Christmas day we use these words, "Almighty God—grant that "we being regenerate, and made thy children by adop-"tion and grace, may daily be renewed by thy holy "Spirit," &c. And again on the 19th Sunday after Trinity we pray, "O God, forasmuch as without thee "we are not able to please thee; mercifully grant, that "thy holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our "hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord." We are taught the reason for offering up these petitions in the 10th article of free-will.

"The condition of man after the fall of Adam is "such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his "own natural strength and good works to faith and "calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to "do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, "without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, "that we may have a good-will, and working with us "when we have that good-will." We have lost by the fall the power of turning and preparing our hearts to any religious exercise, and we have not even the good-will, much less the power to do any one good work, until the grace of God go before and dispose the will, and afterwards work with us, when we have that good-will; from whence it is evident, that the will and the affections must be renewed by the Holy Ghost, before there can be any good in fallen man; agreeably to what we read (Prov. xvi. 1.) "that the preparations "of the heart in man are from the Lord."

From these authorities of scripture, and of our own church, it must be evident to every unprejudiced person, that the heart is by nature inclined to evil, hard and stony, and unwilling to receive any good impressions, and no power can soften it but an almighty Spirit, whose grace alone is able to renew it after the image of him that created it.

And after the understanding is enlightened, and the will and affections renewed, we still want grace every moment to enable us to go on in the ways of holiness. After we have received justifying grace, we continually stand in need of the sanctifying grace of the holy Spirit. We cannot take one step without his assistance: for it is he who worketh in us both to will and to do. We have no power nor might in ourselves, but all our sufficiency is of God. In our spiritual course his grace is as necessary, as breathing is to the body. There is but one word in scripture for the air which the body breathes, and for that grace which is the breath of our spiritual life; and if you cannot move, much less run a race, without breath, how then can you run through

your Christian course without grace? You must breathe the air in at every step, and you must have grace breathed into you every step you take in your way to heaven. And therefore when our blessed Lord breathed upon the apostles, he at the same time explained the meaning of what he did by saying, "receive ye the Holy Ghost," whose gracious office it is to act upon the soul, as breath does upon the body: and hence it is called inspiration, which signifies breathing in, and since this inspiration is as necessary to our spiritual life, as breath is to our animal life, is it not from hence certain, that we cannot take one step in the ways of holiness, unless the inspiration of the Almighty enable us to proceed?

And these are the sentiments of the word of God: "O Lord, I know, says Jeremiah (x. 23.) that the "way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that "walketh to direct his steps." The Psalmist acknowledges it, for he prays, "Hold up my goings in thy "paths, that my footsteps slip not. Incline my heart "unto thy testimonies, and make me to go in the path "of thy commandments." And again he says, "I will "run in the way of thy commandments, when thou "shalt enlarge my heart," when thou shalt give it freedom and liberty, that it may walk with pleasure in those paths which are to the natural man grievous. And the New Testament opens and explains these expressions of the Old, by assuring us, that believers "walk in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit," and are strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, "who "gives them grace to serve God acceptably: for the "fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteous-"ness, and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the "Lord." And to enable us to produce these fruits, the Comforter is to be with us for ever. He is to guide and direct our lives, and to govern our conversations. He will never leave us, nor forsake us, but will support us with his grace every moment. And this his continual assistance our church prays for in these

words: "O God, forasmuch [illegible] thee we are "not able to please thee, mer[illegible]y grant that thy "holy Spirit may in ALL things direct and rule our "hearts." (9th Sunday after Trinity.) And again, "O Lord—grant that by thy holy inspiration we may "think those things that be good, and by thy merciful "guidance may perform the same." (5th Sunday after Easter.) From whence it is evident, that the holy Spirit is our guide through the journey of life. The whole work of sanctification is his. He cleanses the heart, purifies it, fills it full of faith, and hope, and love, and enriches it with all the sweet and heavenly tempers of the blessed Jesus. He sanctifies every visitation to God's people; if it be prosperous, he keeps them humble; if it be adverse, he arms them with patience, and thus he makes all things work together for their good. God grant you may all find these truths verified by your own experience: for truths they are, and you cannot deny them. If you believe the word of God, and if you pay any regard to the doctrines of our church, you must confess, that the holy Spirit is the author and finisher of our happy journey through life. Sinful fallen man has no light to direct him in the way, until the holy Spirit remove the darkness of the understanding, and reveal every saving truth, and then he sees the paths which lead to everlasting joy. This is the first step. But when he sees them he has no will to walk in them. His heart is set against them, it is hard and stony, and inflexibly evil. The holy Spirit alone has power to work upon it, and to melt it down into a softer tender heart, which will freely yield to have the law of God engraven upon it. And after we have taken this step, after we have seen the right road in which our journey lies, and are disposed to walk in it, yet we want power to succeed successfully. Sin made us weak and infirm, and in-bred corruption keeps us so, and therefore the same good Spirit, that worketh all in all, must go along with us every step to strengthen our weakness, and support us every moment

to help our infirmities. We are not sufficient for these things of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.

And since the evidence of this doctrine is clear and full, and not to be denied by any person, who allows the authority of scripture, I may here rest the matter at present, and enquire what effect your assent to it has produced. Have you desired to experience the truth of it? Or have you found the comfort of it in your souls? Do you remember when the Holy Spirit opened your eyes, and brought you out of darkness into his marvellous light? Is your will reconciled to the will of God? And are you able to conform your lives and conversations to it? If you are in this happy state, and if before God the searcher of hearts, you can declare that he has done these wonders for your salvation, O be thankful unto him, and live a life of praise and gratitude. May the holy Spirit direct every thought, and word, and work, to the honour and glory of Jesus Christ your Saviour and your God. But

If you call yourselves Christians, and yet know nothing of those great changes, which the holy Spirit must work in your hearts before you are Christians indeed, O consider in what a dangerous state you live. If God be true, your souls are in darkness, your hearts in sin, and all your faculties under the power of Satan, and until you be enlightened and converted, have a new heart, and a new nature, you are children of wrath, and if you die in this state, you are lost and and ruined to all eternity. If ever you see the face of God with joy, you must be renewed in the spirit of your mind. You must be made just and holy. All this must be done. You must experience it, and you will know it as certainly as you know any truth, when the holy Spirit bears testimony with your spirits, that you are the children of God.

But you have been told, that this doctrine is enthusiasm. It is so, in the opinion of the world, and it ever was, and ever will be. It must be enthusiasm to the na-

tural man to talk of the inward working of the holy Spirit; for he discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because he has no spiritual discernment. To a man who never found himself in darkness, never felt the hardness of his heart, never mourned over his inability to walk in the ways of holiness, it must appear like vision and madness to talk of being enlightened, and renewed, and strengthened in the inner man by the holy Spirit. And indeed this doctrine is become ridiculous. It is become the very mark and badge of religious frenzy. As soon as you mention any work of the holy Spirit, you are supposed to be a little turned in the head, and if you dare maintain the necessity of his grace, you are quite given over. And this shame and reproach is hard to bear. Many persons, who in their consciences assent to the doctrine, are terrified from owning it for fear of the world, and thereby lose all its comforts. I am acquainted with several persons in this unhappy state. God grant you may be all free from it. But as it is a common temptation, with which it is probable every Christian will be tried, it will therefore be proper to consider it.

This is, I suppose, your state. You assent in your minds to the truth of the doctrine, but dare not own it for fear of being called enthusiasts. What weakness is this? Consider well what you lose by being afraid of a nick-name. Can any thing be more weak and foolish, than to set out alone upon your journey for eternity, and to reject the only guide who can direct you safe, because you will be ridiculed for following his directions; and so for fear of being laughed at, you blunder on in the wrong way, until you fall at last into the pit of destruction? And then how will this reflection add to your misery, that you had no temptation to reject the holy Spirit's guidance, but the ridicule of the world. The scripture assured you, that he was your only guide, and you believed it. The church of England taught you to pray to him, and to seek him

ur only guide, and you assented to her doctrines. 'et you gave up the scripture, gave up the doc- of your own church, for fear of a nick-name; ıore, you gave up your hopes of eternal glory. God, what magic is there in a name, that it charm you out of heaven! How dreadful is ch, if it should terrify you more than hell! l not we have thought it unaccountable, if we ıt see it every day, that a hard name, which is ound and nothing more, should work so wonder- ıpon the mind. But, men and brethren, use eason. Will you give up all that is dear and le to avoid a nick-name? Will you lose all the and comforts of the holy Spirit for fear of being an enthusiast? Certainly you cannot act so weak cked a part, and you will not if you fly to the pirit for grace, whenever you find reproach like ger your faith. He will enable you to overcome ıptation, if you seek his strength. He can so ıu with might in the inner man, that the ridicule world will make no impression upon you; nay make it sweet, he will enable you even to bear love it. God grant you may now seek his h. O that he may now be present among you is almighty grace, and dispose every one of you him for your guide through the journey of life, en he will fill your hearts with that perfect love l, which will cast out the fear of men.

if you are not affected with these motives, if you no necessity for being guided by the blessed would to God I could discover the secret of your hearts, and turn them to that adorable whose grace alone can make you happy. O could convince you so far, as to put you this t upon seeking the gracious guidance of the Spirit. But this is his own work. We must and intreat, and importune you to seek his ıce, but the success must come from him. The self is but a dead letter, unless he animate it;

and therefore the preaching of it can have no power, unless he accompany it. We may plant and water, but he must give the increase. O that it may be abundant this day to the glory of Jesus Christ. And all of you who desire it, will join your hearts with mine in requesting it of him.

O almighty God, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people by the sending to them the light of thy holy Spirit, send we beseech thee the same Spirit to enlighten our understandings, that we may have a right judgment in all things, and may his grace operate with power upon our hearts, softening their hard stony nature, and making them willing to obey the law of God; and then grant that he may finish this great work, by enabling us to proceed in the ways of holiness, until we happily end the journey of life. O may the eternal Spirit come down upon this whole congregation, and enlighten, and renew, and strengthen every one of us in the inner man, that we may now and evermore rejoice in his holy comfort, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Spirit, three persons of equal honour, and glory, and dominion, now and for ever. *Amen* and *Amen.*

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.